

Rudolf Matz: Cellist, Teacher, Composer

Margery Enix

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PO BOX 11307, STATION H,

OTTAWA, ONT, CANADA K2H 7V1 FAX: (613) 746 3321

This eminently readable biography recalls a remarkable man who, as the title suggests, was accomplished in many different fields of his profession. He also practised eurhythmics and dancing and in sport he almost reached Olympic standards as a runner. The work with which he gained an international reputation is *The First Years of Violoncello*, which he spent most of his life researching and writing. Today it is considered to be one of the most important contributions for teaching the instrument. As a man, Matz was gregarious and caring, loved and respected by all who came into contact with him. His biographer, Margery Enix, a cellist and teacher who has taught at several universities in the US, is not only meticulous in her research but makes every word come alive.

Enix provides an evocative first chapter on the historical background of Croatian music, setting the scene for the story of a child who responded to music from an early age and whose parents encouraged that interest from the start.

Rudolf Matz was born in 1901 in Zagreb and began general musical studies at the Zagreb Academy of Music at the age of ten. One of his teachers pointed out that he had the perfect hands for playing the cello and so he had his first lessons from the Italian Umberto Fabbri, and later studied with Juro Tkalčić and finally with Vaclav Huml, who he regarded as having the greatest influence on his musical development. Although he had already written works which had been performed publicly when he was 18, at 21 he returned to the Academy to study composition and orchestration with Blagoje Bersa.

By his early 20s Matz was performing with several Zagreb orchestras, in addition to composing, conducting the Glazbeno Društvo Intelektualaca and touring with the Sklad String Quartet.

Enix gives us a detailed and vivid account of Matz's career over the years. Due credit is given to the importance

of Matz's meeting the cellists Antonio Janigro and Luigi Silva, both of whom were enthusiastic about and advised him on his researches for *The First Years of Violoncello*, and of his friendship with his student Slobodan Gospodnetić, who he regarded as his musical successor.

Each section is divided into marked periods, covering the 1914-18 war, the Nazi occupation of Yugoslavia – which caused Matz many problems as his wife was Jewish – the Second World War, his years in the US and finally his return to his beloved Croatia. This is a well-documented, well-illustrated and handsomely produced book which should be of interest to players and music lovers alike.

MARGARET CAMPBELL

Acoustics of Wood

Voichita Bucur

ISBN 0-8493-4801-3

284 pp \$200

CRC PRESS, BOCA RATON 1995

Wood is so intimately related to sound that makers of musical instruments are not usually inclined to ask ourselves why this is so. We rely instead on tradition, experience and feeling; looking for the reasons for using wood is like asking why we need air to breathe.

For many centuries this wonderful material has been well chosen by the discerning makers, and the art of creating sound through musical instruments was an art long before it became a subject of scientific investigation. Nevertheless, makers would certainly benefit from more knowledge of the complexities involved with the acoustics of the instruments they are building and of the physical properties which make wood the best choice for them.

This book is a valuable contribution to this area. Bucur's clear explanations make it easy to understand even complex calculations. Her book is a complete scientific treatise on this topic, a must even for those who have a distaste for formulas or mathematics in general.

Almost 300 pages – with 170 illustrations and 14 pages of index – cover every aspect of Bucur's subject: from the acoustics of forests and concert halls to the factors affecting vibrations in wood,

with theory and practice applied to each family of instruments, the violin in particular. There are many analyses, interpretations and answers to a great number of typical questions, and every chapter contains an in-depth bibliography. In particular, factors influencing the important issue of wood quality are fully defined and discussed with practical information.

The preparation of this text, as the author informs us, involved about ten years' gathering and elaborating the data and latest achievements of acoustics research all over the world. The result is a book essential to all makers wishing to improve or complete their knowledge of wood and sound.

ROBERTO REGAZZI

Analysis of Antique Instruments and Restoration Techniques

Carlo Vettori

No ISBN 168 pp

ARTE LIUTARIA, VIA GUELFA 3, 50129 FLORENCE, ITALY

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As a contribution to lutherie publications, this volume is a disappointment. The first of its three sections addresses restoration techniques, with examples dealing with a button graft, a replacement top block and the reassembly of a badly water-damaged Gasparo da Salò viola da gamba. The various stages in tackling these complicated repairs are insufficiently explained and many of the techniques described have been superseded.

The middle section of the book briefly examines five classical instruments, including violins by Stradivari, Maggini, Amati School and Ceruti. Sadly, apart from the well-preserved Ceruti, the other examples fail to represent their makers' purest work. However, the quality of the photography and the printing is generally impressive. The book closes with a rather self-indulgent section on various quartets of new instruments made by the author and his contemporaries, and an accompanying CD features the playing of some of these instruments.

A major drawback is the quality of the English translation, including a number of mis-translated technical terms.

DAVID RATTRAY