

**BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH**

OF

MADAME

**ADELINA PATTI.**

BY

**MICHEL MORTIER.**

**STEINWAY & SONS' CELEBRATED PIANOS**

USED AT ALL MME. A. PATTI'S CONCERTS.

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ADDRESS:

STEINWAY & SONS,

STEINWAY HALL,

NEW YORK.

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## **FRANZ LISZT.**

Messrs. STEINWAY & SONS:

GENTS: The magnificent STEINWAY Grand Piano now stands in my music room, and presents a *harmonic totality of admirable qualities*, a detailed enumeration of which is the more superfluous as this instrument fully justifies the world-wide reputation that for years you have everywhere enjoyed.

After so much well-deserved praise, permit me also to add my homage, and the expression of my undisguised admiration, with which I remain,

Very sincerely yours,

FRANZ LISZT.

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## **ANTON RUBINSTEIN.**

NEW YORK, May 24, 1873.

Messrs. STEINWAY & SONS:

GENTLEMEN: On the eve of returning to Europe, I deem it my pleasant duty to express to you my most heartfelt thanks for all the kindness and courtesy you have shown me during my stay in the United States; but also, and above all, for your unrivaled Piano-Fortes, which once more have done full justice to their world-wide reputation, both for excellence and capacity of enduring the severest trials. For during all my long and difficult journeys all over America, in a very inclement season, I used, and have been enabled to use, your Pianos exclusively in my Two Hundred and Fifteen Concerts, and also in private, with the most eminent satisfaction and effect.

Yours very truly,

ANTON RUBINSTEIN.

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## **THEODORE THOMAS.**

CINCINNATI, July 19, 1879.

Messrs. STEINWAY & SONS:

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Respectfully Yours,

THEODORE THOMAS.

October 8<sup>th</sup> 1881



CR AIG-Y-NOS CASTLE  
YSTRADCYNLAIS,  
(SWANSEA VALLEY)  
SOUTH WALES.

Dear Mr. Mortimer.

I accept - with pleasure -  
your kind offer to  
publish my biography -  
all the more so - as -  
it is certainly the most  
complete yet made.

With best - thanks

Believe me

Yours faithfully

Lucina Datta

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## ADELINA PATTI.

Sans doute quelque fée heureuse qu'on adore  
Doua de son génie, en tournant le fuseau,  
Adelina Patti, souple comme un roseau,  
Folle comme une enfant, jeune comme l'aurore !

On voit, en s'élançant de son gosier sonore,  
Les notes de son chant gonfler son cou d'oiseau ;  
Elle tient les coeurs pris comme dans un réseau  
Et mille fleurs de feu dans l'air semblent éclore.

Et tandis que sa voix, éveillant le frisson  
Des enchantements, vibre, et découpe le son  
Tissu mystérieux, en féeriques dentelles,

On dirait qu'elle veut au ciel prendre son vol,  
Quand ses bras gracieux battent comme des ailes,  
Car elle a l'oeil perçant et noir du rossignol !

THÉODORE DE BANVILLE.

MADAME

**ADELINA PATTI.**

BIOGRAPHY.

I.

ADELINA PATTI is almost as much an American as a Spaniard. Born in Madrid, on the 19th February, 1843, she came, at the early age of five, to the United States, where her family settled and where she was brought up until her seventeenth year. Adelina's mother was well-known in the *dilettante* world under the name of Madame Barilli. She made an excellent record in the principal cities of Italy and her second husband Salvator Patti was also a distinguished singer. After the birth of Adelina, Madame Patti, who had already given birth to seven children, wished to return to the stage, but unfortunately her voice had entirely disappeared and she was obliged to bid farewell for ever to the theatre.

"I really think," said Madame Patti, "that Adelina has taken all my voice from me;" and, indeed, it seems that she could not have spoken the truth more precisely.

In 1848 after considerable losses the Patti family came to New York, where Maurice Strakosch, Adelina's brother-in-law, was the manager of the Italian Opera in a fairly successful season. From that time, that is to say, from the time when she was only five years old, the irresistible vocation of Adelina showed itself. Music was her first amusement, and she sang as she spoke. So it happened that one day when her mother reprimanded her about the constant singing, which she thought a fault, Adelina replied: "What can I do, Mamma, I cannot speak, but the moment I begin to sing everything becomes easy to me."

Naturally when he saw the extraordinary aptitude of his little sister-in-law, Maurice Strakosch immediately guessed how much he could make of her, and he gave himself up to contrive a scheme by which he could get possession of this little star. He sought to train her and above all, he taught her not to tire her voice, the voice which has since proved so Siren-like in its enchanting power.

At that time Madame Alboni, who happened to be in New York, and who had heard a great deal about the phenomenal Adelina, expressed a great desire to hear her. Adelina was very willing to sing before the celebrated *artiste*, but only on one condition, which was, that they should have a game of hide and seek together. In spite of her large and majestic frame Alboni accepted the terms, but all at once Adelina disappeared and she was found hidden underneath a bed where she was almost choking with laughter. Alboni could not possibly catch her in such a hiding place. Adelina continued to laugh at her play-mate's discomfiture, but the latter was equal to the occasion and established a siege. She sat down before the bed and refused to allow Adelina to come out until she had consented to sing. And it was in that horizontal position, the worst in the world for singing, that Adelina Patti for the first time in her life sang the entire *aria* from *Sonnambula*; an *aria* which she has since made one of her greatest triumphs. Alboni sat in mute astonishment and when the little warbler had finished she clasped her in her arms, exclaiming:

"Ah, my dear child, the day will come when you will make the world forget us all!"

A short time after this Adelina made her first appearance at a concert given at Tripler Hall, and in mentioning this *début* we cannot pass over an incident which well characterizes the charming childhood of the *débutante*. When she was about to go on the stage after the curtain was raised she asked for her doll. Her parents at first pretended to be angry with her, but nothing would do, and she declared that she could not sing without the doll. They were obliged to yield and with the doll in her arms she advanced resolutely to a table upon which she was lifted in order that the audience might be able to see her. Her success was enormous and upon the next day, all New York was filled with the name and praise of Adelina Patti. After her successful appearance at Tripler Hall she visited the principal towns of the United States. She gave concerts at Washington, Boston, Philadelphia, New Orleans and elsewhere, and everywhere she met with great success. After traversing the United States she went to Havana and concluded her series of concerts at Porto Rico.

It was on her return to New York that her serious studies began, and in order to follow them up assiduously, she practised for three years without appearing upon the stage. Manzocchi, a professor, who was then well-known in the United States, began her musical education and taught her the scales. For eighteen months he continued to instruct her, but when the time came for her to appear upon the stage Ettore Barilli, her half-brother, finished her musical education. It was also Ettore Barilli who wrote the famous *point d'orgue* for Madame Patti which she gave with such wonderful effect in "Lucia."

During these three years which were entirely given up to study she had reached the age of sixteen and she would still have waited for some years before appearing in public, had it not been for a particular circumstance which hastened the time of her appearance. In 1859 the political crisis which culminated in the war was already making itself felt. Naturally the theatres were among the first to suffer from this feeling of uncertainty. So the Italian Opera at New York where performances were being given at the Academy of Music under the direction of Maurice Strakosch and Ullman suffered severely. In spite of the energy of the managers and an excellent company of artists the enterprise was about to fall to pieces. A final attempt to save the numerous interests which were involved in the opera venture had to be made, and it was at that moment, under the most unfavorable auspices for a *début*, that the public of New York saw Adelina Patti still almost a child—for she was only sixteen—make her first appearance in “Lucia di Lampermoor.” This took place upon the 24th of November, 1859. One might have thought that it would only have been possible for the young singer to attempt the difficult rôle of Lucia with many alterations and apologies. But although naturally moved, Adelina created a murmur of astonishment from the first act. Admiration succeeded to astonishment, for the part of Lucia had never before been rendered with so much art and so much passion. Her success was immense. After many years the *cantatrice* can look back upon no greater triumph. The enthusiasm of the people was enormous. The public forgot politics and came in crowds to the Academy of Music where each performance was an ovation for the young artiste.

The Italian Opera was saved; Adelina Patti saved it.

## II.

AS HAS BEEN shown in the last chapter it was in the New World that the Star rose which shines so brightly all over the globe to-day. It can be truly said that all nations may claim the honor of owning her, for Paris, London, Vienna, St. Petersburg, Madrid, Brussels and all Germany have one after the other applauded her. Adelina Patti is a citizen of the world; for everywhere she has had immense ovations and provoked the greatest enthusiasm.

After a year's sojourn in New York, the young singer, who was already a shining star, went to London, where she made her first appearance on May 14, 1861, at the Covent Garden Theatre in the part of “Amina,” in “Sonnambula.” It is needless to say that her success was enormous and on the next day every capital in Europe resounded with the name of Adelina Patti. Propositions exceptionally favorable were

made to her from all sides; but none was accepted, for the great artiste, with a most praiseworthy sentiment of gratitude towards the people who were the first to welcome her upon European soil, resolved to pass the whole season in London.

To describe this season, at length, would be tiresome to the reader, for it would merely be to repeat over and over again the words "success, success, success." The following story will show how great the victory—for that is the proper word—gained by the young *débutante* was. It had been agreed between Patti and the Manager of the Covent Garden Theatre, Mr. Gye, that she should make three *débuts* without any compensation; after that, if she proved successful, he promised to sign an agreement giving her £100 a month after the first two performances, but her success was so great that Gye himself brought her of his own accord a contract giving her £400 a month and wanted her to make it for three consecutive seasons. It should be mentioned here that Madame Patti is paid as much as \$4000 an evening now in some towns, so that the sum of \$2000 a month seems very small. But it must not be forgotten that when she first appeared her manager might have held her to the terms of her engagement, that is to say to £100 a month.

After her triumphs at New York and London, Adelina Patti went to Paris where she made her first appearance upon November 17th, 1862, at the *Théâtre Italien* in the part of "Amina," in "Sonnambula." The artistic capital of the world awaited with lively curiosity the appearance of the great singer, who had astonished the American and English public. The Parisian public fearing some exaggeration in the enthusiasm created in other countries by the young artiste, wished at first to reserve its full appreciation, but from the sound of her first notes, reserve disappeared making way for an immense ovation. Even the "old stagers" who had shown so much scepticism about the *débutante* were obliged to confess that the part of "Amina" had never before been better, indeed, not so well played. Never before had they seen such a marvellous charm; nor had the ear ever been caressed with sounds so pure and so divine.

### III.

After London and Paris Adelina Patti went to Madrid for a series of fifteen representations. The people of Madrid remembering that the new star had been born in their city, prepared to give her a grand reception, but the majority of them were unable to hear her. The audience which was present on the first night was so astonished and delighted that every seat in the theatre was taken during the second act for the whole time that Patti was to remain in Madrid. One can easily imagine how great the disappointment of the other inhabitants was when they learned that it would be

impossible for them, even once, to hear the great star. So great was the excitement that it required an extra body of police to keep order and prevent the more excited admirers of "La Diva," from coming to blows.

Such an ovation has never welcomed any artist even at the apogee of her fame; and at that time Adelina Patti was merely a *débutante*, almost unknown.

Naturally, her success had to increase and a large volume would scarcely suffice, were we to recount each new triumph. Great ovations welcomed her in "Lucia," "Traviata," "Linda di Chamounix," "Rigoletto," "Trovatore," "Barbieri," "Don Pasquale," "Marta," and later on in "Pardon de Ploermel," "Faust," "Etoile du Nord," "Romeo et Juliette," "Huguenots," "Semiramide," "Otello," "Aida," etc., etc. It would be impossible to describe in proper terms the great talent with which the incomparable artiste rendered these parts, which, when interpreted by her became veritable creations and appeared to the public under an altogether new and ideal light. We may say, with Theophile Gautier:

"Après cela, l'art remonte à Dieu."

#### IV.

After her marriage with the Marquis de Caux, which took place on July 27th, 1868, and at which the Duke of Manchester was present as the "témoin" of the bride, she appeared again on the stage in Paris, but only for six weeks, for a brilliant engagement of two months took her away to St. Petersburg. Her success in the Russian capital surpassed all imagination. The town opened a subscription to procure a neck-lace of diamonds which was to be presented to the illustrious singer. In a few weeks the subscription had reached the enormous sum of 100,000 roubles. The Czar himself gave her the medal of merit made of gold and diamonds, and she was received at Court with all the honors due to an artist of her high rank.

After Russia came Germany, then Italy, Belgium and Holland. Everywhere the public worshipped the divine *cantatrice* and gave her receptions so magnificent that no recital could do them justice. Besides it would be merely a repetition, for everywhere the same success, the same victories awaited her. Adelina Patti could say with Cæsar, but with a slight variation:

"I came, I sang, I conquered!"

But all these triumphs and the adulation which was heaped upon her in no way detracted from either her modest demeanor or her charity. Everyone who has had the honor of meeting Madame Patti will agree

with us that the glorious halo which envelopes her has not lessened in the slightest degree her natural affability or her exquisite goodness. She still enjoys a surprise as a child would and the slightest attention flatters her just as it did at the beginning of her career so it does now after the twenty years, during which she has reigned triumphant wherever she has been.

At the risk of shocking the truly sincere modesty of our heroine, we cannot refrain from mentioning, among a large number of charitable acts, a few which seem to us to have the greatest interest for our readers.

In 1865, Adelina Patti was engaged at Florence for a series of ten performances when the Asiatic fever broke out among the working classes with great fury. The great artiste, of her own accord, gave up all her engagements for the evening and organized a representation for the aid of the sufferers from the epidemic.

In 1875 she sang for the Deaf and Dumb Hospital which was about to be built in London. The honor of laying the first stone was tendered to her, and the memorable occasion is perpetuated by the inscription on that stone which can be seen at the corner of Gray's Inn Road in London. The inscription upon it reads as follows:

*"This Stone was laid by Madame Adelina Patti, Marquise de Caux, 16 September, A. D. 1875."*

Again after the Franco-German war, she gave a representation in Paris in aid of the wounded. This charitable performance brought in no less than \$12,000. But even this grand generosity was surpassed when last spring she organized in Paris a concert for the sufferers by the fire at the Theatre at Nice, which netted over \$28,000.

Indeed whenever there has been a question of real sorrow or misfortune Madame Patti has never waited to be called upon before she tendered her services.

## V.

We have now reached a point far distant from the little débutante of Tripler Hall and the Academy of Music. She who passed all her childhood in the United States, returns as a conqueror, happy in what she gaily terms her "return to her cradle." She will doubtless find here the same triumphs which welcomed her in the Old World, where she was adored as well as a woman as a singer.

The two following facts from out of a thousand others will show in what estimation she is held in Europe. Last year upon the occasion of her last appearance in Berlin, the Emperor William sent her his portrait magnificently framed, with this inscription written by his own royal hand:

*"Guillaume,  
Imperator-Rex,  
1880."*

In Germany this honor is strictly reserved for members of reigning royal families, and at the time when Madame Patti received this portrait, the Emperor had not yet sent a similar one to Prince Rudolph of Austria on the occasion of his marriage with the daughter of the King of the Belgians. Some time after the close of her season in Berlin, in the month of December of the same year, Madame Patti sang at Madrid, where her success surpassed all bounds. She was invited to Court where she was most cordially welcomed. During the evening the Queen brought her newly born infant and, placing it in the arms of the Diva, said: "At all events, when she grows up, she will be able to say that she had the honor of being held in the arms of "The Patti"; that will bring her good luck." As the Emperor William had done, the King and Queen presented her with their portraits bearing this magnificent inscription:

"A la Señora Adelina Patti recuerdo de unos admiradores de la gran artista, y intusiastos de la Madrileña.

"Maria Cristina. . . Alfonso.

"Madrid, Decembre, 1880."

(To Madame Adelina Patti as a souvenir of profound admiration for the great artist and of great enthusiasm towards the native of Madrid.)

Wonderful propositions were made to her if she would remain in Madrid. Among other things she was offered a palace on the Prado, the title deeds of a large amount of property and \$60,000 for thirty performances. Madame Patti, however, refused every offer as she wished to return to the United States in the full splendor of her voice, which is now richer than ever.

While some one was insisting upon her acceptance of these offers, it was remarked that she was born in Spain, indeed in Madrid.

"Yes," she replied, "I was born in Spain, but I was brought up in the United States, and I wish that the compatriots of my childhood should hear me while I am still in the full possession of my powers."

This was her only reason for leaving her magnificent castle, Craig-y-nos, in Wales, for braving the dangers and fatigues of a voyage across the Atlantic, and for abandoning the magnificent offers of large sums of money, which have been made to her in Europe.

This desire of "returning home" does her honor but will not surprise anyone who knows Adelina Patti. She is a true artiste exceptionally gifted by nature, and doubtless God would never have sent her into the world except on a day when he was well pleased with mankind.



## TWO LETTERS FROM RICHARD WAGNER.

During the Grand Operatic Festival at Bayreuth in 1876, a number of new Grand Pianos of the most celebrated European as well as of several American makers had been placed at Mr. Richard Wagner's disposal; among them a new Centennial Concert Grand piano made by "Steinway & Sons" of New York, which from its wonderful power, beauty and sympathetic quality of tone far outshone all rival instruments and which Mr. Richard Wagner at once chose for his own private use.

In the beginning of 1879, Mr. Wagner was requested by Mr. Theo. Steinway to send this Grand piano to the Steinway Central European depot, in order to receive the latest invention, the "Tone Pulsator," patented in July 1878. On sending the Grand, Mr. Wagner writes as follows:

"BAYREUTH, March 11th, 1879.

*My dear Mr. Steinway,*

I miss my Steinway Grand as one misses a beloved wife; it is wanting constantly, wanting everywhere. I no longer indulge in music since that Grand is gone, and trust its absence will not be too long protracted.

Very truly yours,

RICHARD WAGNER."

The following letter was written to Mr. Theodore Steinway by the great Master shortly after the return of the Steinway Grand (now containing the Tone Pulsator) to his home:

"BAYREUTH, April 11th, 1879.

*My dear Mr. Steinway,*

Really, you ought personally to have witnessed the gratification which I experienced upon receiving back your magnificent Grand piano; you certainly would not have asked me to add another word.

I do indeed deem it humiliating for so many other branches of art, that this art of building pianofortes alone should so closely approach such undeniable ideal perfection. I know of nothing in Painting, Sculpture, Architecture, Literature and, unfortunately also Music, which—since I have comprehension of same—could compare with the masterly perfection reached in pianoforte building.

From your communication however I readily perceive with what enthusiastic love you seek to attain the incorporation of the most "spirituelle" tone into the piano which heretofore had only served as the exponent of actual musical sound. Our great Tone-Masters, when writing the grandest of their creations for the pianoforte, seem to have had a presentiment of the Ideal Grand Piano, as now attained by yourselves. A Beethoven Sonata, a Bach Chromatic Phantasie, can only be fully appreciated when rendered upon one of your pianofortes.

Although I do not possess the slightest dexterity in pianoforte playing, I delight in being able to do justice to your assumption of my inborn and cultivated sense of tone. For Sounds of such Beauty as those coming from my Steinway Grand, flatter and coax the most agreeable Tone-pictures from my harmonic melodic senses.

*In a word, "I find Your Grand piano of wondrous beauty. It is a noble work of Art."* And with a thousand thanks for this new attention, I delight in being able to call myself

Your friend,

RICHARD WAGNER."

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Signed:

WILLIAM THOMSON,  
E. LAVASSEUR,  
ED. FAVRE PERRET,  
J. SCHIEDMAYER,  
J. E. HILGARD,

HENRY K. OLIVER,  
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The public is respectfully cautioned against tables of figures advertised by several unprincipled pianoforte manufacturers, for which no authority whatever can be produced, and which have been contradicted and declared false and fraudulent by the Judges themselves. The ratings on the instruments of the different exhibitors, as originally made and copied by the Judges from their note-books, reveal the significant fact that the Steinway Pianofortes, in each and every style, were rated far above all other competing instruments, and reached a

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## **HECTOR BERLIOZ.**

PARIS, September 25, 1867.

Messrs. STEINWAY & SONS:

I have heard the magnificent pianes you brought from America and which emanate from your factory. Permit me to compliment you upon the excellent and rare qualities which these instruments possess. Their sonority is splendid and essentially noble; moreover, you have discovered the secret to lessen, to an imperceptible point, that unpleasant harmonic of the minor seventh, which heretofore made itself heard on the eighth or ninth note of the longer strings, to such a degree as to render some of the most simple and finest chords disagreeable (cacophonique). This improvement is a great progress among the various others you have introduced in the manufacture of your Pianos—a progress for which all artists and amateurs gifted with delicate perception, must be infinitely indebted to you.

Accept, I beg of you, with my compliments, my highest respects.

Your devoted

HECTOR BERLIOZ.

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## **A. MARMONTEL.**

PARIS, July 20, 1867.

Messrs. STEINWAY & SONS:

I rejoice in the justified success which your Pianos have had at the Exposition.

The International and French Jury, in placing them *first on the list*, brilliantly confirm the lively and deep impression which these excellent Pianos have produced on me.

With kind affections, yours,

MARMONTEL.

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## **ADOLPHE HENSELT.**

PARIS, September 2, 1867.

Messrs. STEINWAY & SONS:

GENTLEMEN: It is with the greatest pleasure that I have just played upon your Pianos, and can not refrain from expressing to you, in writing, my admiration, and how much I was satisfied with them. I regret much not to have seen you personally in Paris.

Accept, I beg of you, the assurance of my distinguished regards.

ADOLPHE HENSELT.

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