



Villa Salterio Erker

Villa Salterio, with a noticeable simple neo-classic style, is the home of many stories about arts and its tenants. Its most famous dweller is the opera composer Vincenzo Bellini (1801-1835), who lived in Moltrasio for many years.

The mansion and its large garden were property of the Baron Filippo Durini during the 18th century. Here, the Baron had a *"living birds museum, a very peculiar thing and it is possibile to hear the sinister screeching of the eagle and the loving crying of the songbird"* as described by G. B. Giovio.

*Picture above: the villa in the early 20th century.
Picture below: the villa in the mid 20th century.*



The property was bought in 1820 by the local Salterio family, who restyled the inside. Some years later, the family rented the villa to the Milanese Cantù family, where their daughter Giuditta and his husband Ferdinando Turina lived until 1870.

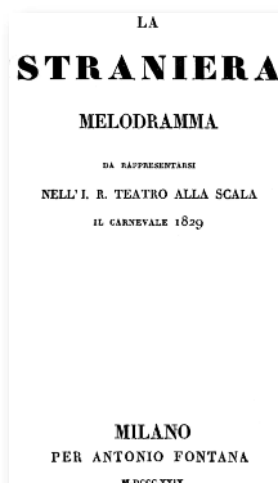
This villa was also the scenario of the romantic tragedy between Giuditta Cantù Turina and Vincenzo Bellini. The days during the fall season of 1828 that the composer spent in Mol-

trasio with Giuditta created the perfect atmosphere for him to write the well-known opera *La Straniera* (The Foreign Woman). It is said that Giuditta inspired the composer to create this masterpiece, and that it was dedicated to her. The opera was performed for the first time in 1829 in the Teatro alla Scala in Milan, and it was highly praised. This opera is a turning point for the melodrama genre, being in between the Rossini style and the new romantic type of music.



Above: on the left Giuditta Cantù Turina, on the right Vincenzo Bellini.

On the side: on the left, the front page of the libretto "La Straniera"; on the right, an image representing the soprano Henriette Méric-Lalande playing the role of Alaide.





When, in 1885, Cavalier Alessandro Gallone acquired the villa - a quadrangular plan building structured in three floors -, it had a cleaner aspect than the present one. The Gallone family was responsible for the refurbishment of the garden, and they also built a small private dock in the lake with a double staircase and some decorative ornaments. In 1908, Alessandro's nephew, Carlo Gallone, also a composer, placed a commemorative plaque in memory of Vincenzo

Bellini on the front of the villa, which remains there in the present days. The inauguration of the plaque was a big event which all the authorities and the inhabitants of the area attended. In the mid-20th century, right before the Austrian Erker Hovecar family acquired the villa, the facade of the building was restored and enriched by the replacement of the stone banister with a gable, inspired on the Italian architect Piermarini.



Matthew Bellamy, singer and guitarist of the music band Muse, created the Bellini Studio, which was set in the villa. They recorded there part of their album *The Resistance*. The band, between 2006 and 2010, introduced the villa to new sounds, following the musical and artistic tradition of the villa.

The songwriter Bellamy is recognised for his wide tenor vocal range and in 2009 was nominated "Guitarist of the decade" by the UK magazine *Total Guitar*.



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