

New York and the other great American cities where Serafin conducted. We also follow him to the great opera houses of Italy and elsewhere in Europe – until 29 January 1964, when he was unable to complete a performance of *Die Meistersinger*. He was 90 years old and suffering from blood circulation problems; he died four years later.

In numerous footnotes, the author meticulously records the dates of all the first nights, and of the dates of birth and death of all the composers, conductors, singers and family members referred to in the text: they include his wife, the soprano Elena Rakowska (née Ruzkovskaja), his daughter Vittoria (his only daughter, and Nicola Rossi-Lemeni's first wife), his

granddaughter Donatella Sabetta (of whom he was very fond) and his brother Leandro. No fewer than 11 whole pages are devoted to Maria Callas, and I have no doubt that readers will find new information about her.

Books of this quality are so rare that they need to be singled out and widely publicised. Nicla Sguotti's biography of Tullio Serafin is already one of my favourites. I read it straight through without putting it down.

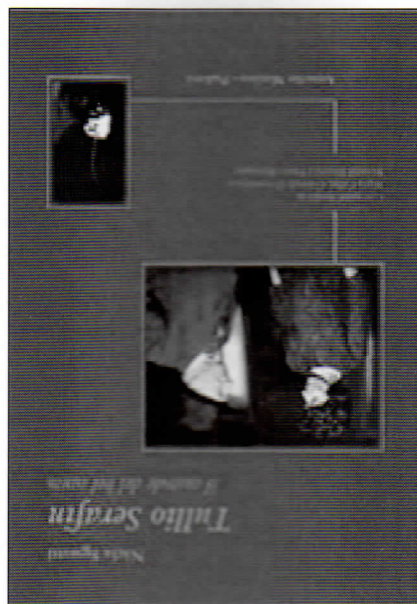
To conclude, *Tullio Serafin, Il custode del bel canto* is a must, not only for people interested in Maria Callas – with whom Serafin was so closely linked – but also for those who want to know more about a great conductor who was not accorded a decent burial-place until 11 years after he died, thanks to the wonderful Gianandrea Gavazzeni.

Nicla Sguotti: Tullio Serafin, Il custode del bel canto
Armalin Musica, Padua,
2014. 277 pages

(Translation:
 Michael Cunningham)



Milan, Basilica Santa Eufemia, 24 March/3 April 1953:
during recording sessions of I puritani, with Tullio Serafin



By Jean-Jacques Hanin-Roussel
 Nicla Sguotti is a graduate of the University of Padua; her doctoral thesis on Tullio Serafin, *Il custode del bel canto* (Tullio Serafin, the custodian of bel canto) has now been published.

Serafin came from Rottanova di Cavare, a village of some 1200 inhabitants in the far south of the Province of Venice (but somewhat closer to Padua and Rovigo), and that is where Mis Sguotti herself has always lived. The fruit of her research is a magnificent biography of a great opera conductor, and one who will be long remembered, together with Francesco Siciliani, for discovering Maria Callas. Serafin conducted the Greek-American diva on 75 occasions and made 15 recordings with her. What

more is there to say?

One of the book's commendable features is the fact that it contains a complete chronology of Serafin's musical life from 1898 when, even though still a student, he was conducting under the name of Alfo Sulterni, an anagram of Tullio Serafin. The chronology alone takes up 100 pages: compare that with the miserly 30 pages that Teodoro Celli and Giuseppe Pugliese give over to the great man in *Tullio Serafin, Il patriarca del melodramma*. Sguotti's book also includes a discography setting out the Maestro's 84 recordings.

In addition, there are 24 re-transcribed letters that Serafin received between 1912 and 1967 from luminaries such as Gabriele d'Annunzio, Gian Francesco Malipiero, Pietro Mascagni, Italo Montemezzi, Ildebrando Pizzetti, Franco Alfano, Richard Strauss and... Maria Callas (two unpublished letters from 1960 and 1967!). Sguotti's research takes us on many long journeys – to Buenos Aires, Montevideo and Rio de Janeiro, and to