

ARTICLE ON HARP GUITAR MEETING

“Corriere Mercantile” - Genova, April 29, 2010

A pleasant and quite unusual event was held yesterday afternoon at the Best Western City Hotel in Genoa, via San Sebastiano, where Franco Ghisalberti, a Genoese music lover and harp guitar collector, organised the first meeting/exhibition of harp guitars and other types of guitars with more than six strings, that is to say not classical guitars. About two dozen harp guitars were exhibited that were made available by their owners. Among them one of Taraffo's with its pedestal (*actually one of Pasquale's brother's instruments – GM*) for the first time kindly shown to the public by the Cagetti family of Genoa. So quite a number of owners and lovers of such guitars both from Liguria, from Milan and other regions as well have then been listening to the informal conversation between Franco Ghisalberti, the great guitarist Beppe Gambetta, and the American Gregg Miner, President of the Harp Guitar Foundation of Los Angeles, who had expressly come to Genoa to join this meeting to speak about its targets and activities.

Harp guitars date back to ancient times but they reached their highest success in the decades from the end of 1890's to the end of the 1930's, owing to their sounding much louder than classical guitars and therefore more suitable to be played for a wider audience.

The greatest guitarist for this type of guitar was then the Genoese Pasquale Taraffo (1887-1937) who played his guitar all over the world and mostly reached his highest success when playing together with (*tenor*) Mario Cappello. A complete discography has recently been published of Mario Cappello in a CD by Devega supervised by Franco Ghisalberti.

The reason why this instrument fell into disuse was essentially the coming out of electrical amplifiers and the excessive weight of (*this type of harp-*) guitar. Which means that, except for a small number of persevering lovers of it, this instrument has to be rediscovered and appreciated again specially by us Genoese so that it can be handed down to posterity as it deserves.

The six string guitar was too weak in sound according to Taraffo's idea essentially because he felt that in order to suit the taste of the public of his time he had to play performances which would be beyond the sound of classic guitar popular repertoire. So with the help of luthier Settimio Gazzo he produced a special fourteen string guitar of his own design to be played resting on a pedestal.

In 1910 after an outstanding success at home, he left for Barcellona where he is said to have held his concerts over forty nights in the same place and be acclaimed as “El dios de la Guitarra”, the god of the guitar.