

Research

Diego de Castro: music unites all people

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Abstract:

Diego de Castro was a statistician, lawyer, diplomat and professor, born in Piran. He was renowned for his deep knowledge of the problematic of the Trieste border, about which he wrote extensive works. A primary school in Italian language "Vincenzo e Diego de Castro" in Piran is named after him. As a diplomat and scholar, he stated in one of his final writings that music is the only art that unites all people.

Keywords: Diego de Castro; Piran; Primary school; Tartini; Music experience.

1. Who was Diego de Castro

1.1. *De Castro's birthplace*

Diego de Castro (1907–2003) was born in Piran as the last descendant of an old Piranese family. His birthplace was the Gabrielli family palace, a mid-19th-century building that today houses the “Sergej Mašera” Maritime Museum. According to the website of the “Sergej Mašera” Maritime Museum, the rotunda is a small circular salon of this palace, because of which the building was once called “La Rotonda”. **(Figure 1)**



Figure 1. “La Rotonda,” part of the palace where Diego de Castro was born; today a memorial room dedicated to Diego de Castro in the “Sergej Mašera” Museum in Piran.

The building next to the museum is the Italian-language primary school named after him and after a member of the de Castro family born a century earlier, Vincenzo. The “Vincenzo e Diego de Castro” Primary School is located in the center of Piran and also has branch schools in Lucija and Sečovelje. **(Figure 2)**



Figure 2. Primary School “Vincenzo e Diego de Castro” in Piran.

1.2. The surname *de Castro*

The origin of the surname *de Castro* is particularly interesting. As stated in a publication of the “Vincenzo e Diego de Castro” Primary School (Romanello et al., 1998), it is one of the oldest surnames in Piran (**Figure 3**). The surname *de Castro* derives from the Latin word *castrum*, a toponym meaning “the fortified base of a Roman legion,” as noted by Wikipedia. According to the same school publication, in the Middle Ages *castrum* referred to any settlement that was not the seat of a bishopric. Piran was such a place, unlike, for example, Trieste, Novigrad, Poreč and Pula, which were considered cities because they had bishoprics. At the end of the first millennium, *de Castro* was not yet a surname but simply meant an inhabitant of a *castrum* (Romanello et al., 1998).



Figure 3. Coat of arms of the *de Castro* family in the Municipal Palace in Piran.

1.3. *De Castro's education, work and legacy*

As states Rosanna Panelli (Panelli, 2000) on the website “Diego de Castro,” he spent his childhood in his hometown until the age of nine, where he began attending primary school. The family later moved to their villa in Savudrija. He completed secondary school in Trieste and graduated in law from the University of Rome. Soon afterward, he became an assistant at the Faculty of Law in Rome and also attended a school of statistics. After completing his studies, he began teaching statistics at various Italian universities until he became a full professor in Turin. In Turin, he founded the Institute of Statistics, which was later named after him.

As stated on the aforementioned website (Panelli, 2000), during the Second World War, he participated in the preparation of a peace plan and spent some time in England. For many years, he dealt with the issue of Italy's eastern border and published his reflections on the subject in the book “The Problem of Trieste” (1952). That same year, he was appointed Italy's diplomatic representative in London—where he became a member of the Royal Statistical Society—and in Washington. As a leading expert on the Trieste question, he later published five books and numerous articles on the topic. After two years of diplomatic service, he returned to teaching at the University of Turin and later in Rome. Altogether, he taught for more than half a century. For his work, he received several recognitions in Italy and abroad, and after his retirement, the Italian President appointed him Professor Emeritus.

According to his wishes, *de Castro* is buried in the family tomb in the Piran cemetery (**Figure 4**). In his will, he left his library to Piran, consisting of 4200 books and around 10000 volumes of publications, mostly scientific journals in the field of statistics. The library is kept at the Italian Community “Giuseppe Tartini” in Piran. (Panelli, 2000).



Figure 4. tomb at the cemetery in Piran, where Diego de Castro is buried. In the background, a view of the sea. Diego de Castro wrote about the Piran cemetery (de Castro, 2003) that it is the “most beautiful cemetery,” from which one can see the “most beautiful panorama I have seen on the four continents I have visited.”

2. Diego de Castro and music

2.1. *De Castro's experience with music*

As Branka Preden writes in her master's thesis (Preden, 2015: 30), Diego de Castro played the violin as a child. Later in his life, however, he did not enjoy attending concerts, as music “moved him too deeply” (Preden, 2015: 30). As Branka Preden further notes, de Castro encouraged and financially supported all of his daughters' cultural interests. According to Preden (Preden, 2015: 74), he also contributed funds for the restoration of the organ in the Church of St. George in Piran.

2.2. *De Castro's thoughts about music*

De Castro wrote beautifully about music. In a letter addressed to the people of Piran shortly before his death (de Castro, 2003), written in response to an invitation to the opening ceremony of the primary school that would thereafter bear his name, he reflected on Giuseppe Tartini and on the phenomenon of music in general. As he wrote, the people of Piran should be proud of their town also because of Tartini's magnificent music, which made the town known around the world.

The letter from de Castro to the people of Piran, enlarged to poster size and exhibited at the Primary School “Vincenzo e Diego de Castro,” (**Figure 5**) concludes with the author's wish that all the people of Piran love one another regardless of their origin (De Castro, 2003).



Figure 5. Biographies of Diego and Vincenzo de Castro and a letter by Diego de Castro (on the right), Primary School “Vincenzo e Diego de Castro”.

De Castro stated that “music is the only art that unites all peoples.” (de Castro, 2003). He further substantiates this idea by explaining that “people, regardless of race, language, place of residence, or level of cultural understanding, can, through modern audio technology, listen to music at the same moment throughout the world—from Europe to Africa, from America to Australia and Asia. Millions, billions of people can, wherever they may be and at any moment, enjoy Tartini’s music” (de Castro, 2003).

2.2.1. Musical experience in the contemporary anthropology

The experience of music can therefore be accessible at the same moment anywhere in the world. Among the leading contemporary anthropologists who contributed to modern anthropological theory of experience are Victor Turner and Clifford Geertz (Throop, 2003). The perception and phenomenology of musical experience were examined in detail by Harris Berger (Berger, 2013), who explored how meaning can be found and created in music, and how situation and the broader cultural context influence the meaning people find in culture. Among other findings, Berger concluded that the formation of experience is not strictly a personal matter—although individuals exercise partial control over it, culture plays a crucial role. As further emphasises Berger (Berger, 2013), social context is also crucial: our ability to follow a particular dimension of musical structure largely depends on our previous experiences with music and on our formal and informal musical education.

3. Conclusions

A statistician, lawyer, diplomat, professor and author of numerous books and articles, Diego de Castro remains present in the memories of many residents of Piran, especially older members of the Italian community. In his hometown of Piran, an Italian-language primary school is named after him, allowing new generations to become acquainted with him. The Primary School “Vincenzo e Diego de Castro” is also attended by children of foreign immigrants, including several Russians and Ukrainians. Diego de Castro in his letter written for the school’s opening conveyed the message that all residents of his native town should love one another regardless of their origin. He encouraged the people of Piran to be proud of their town, in which the great musician Giuseppe Tartini was born. Of all the arts, de Castro stated, it is music that unites different people across the globe, since today it is possible to broadcast and hear music simultaneously anywhere in the world.

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