



# Moreschi: The Last Castrato (Life & Times)

*Nicholas Clapton*

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Alessandro Moreschi (1858-1922), known during his life as the 'Angel of Rome', is remembered today as the only castrato singer to have made recordings. Historically he was the last representative of the centuries-old tradition of castrating boy singers in order to preserve their high-pitched voices into adulthood - an act of cruelty which produced some of the greatest singers the world has ever known.

Behind the extraordinary sound of the voice of 'the last castrato' lies a strange and lonely life lived in the shadow of great events and great institutions, a personality glimpsed by inference and allusion. During his lifetime his singing was universally praised: the great tenor Giacomo Lauri-Volpi described Moreschi's voice as 'flutingly soft, light, spontaneous, unforced and uncontrived'. More recent critics have spoken of it as both 'fascinating' and 'one of the saddest things in the world'.

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