

*“The world over here  
is so different”*



## *Alice Ettinger's Musical Career*

*by M. Alison Kibler*

IN 1893, A 16-YEAR-OLD GIRL from Waterloo, Iowa, said farewell to her father at the train station in Cedar Rapids and boarded a train to Chicago to begin voice lessons. Thus began a career in music that took this teenager, Alice Ida Ettinger, to New York, London, Paris, and Berlin, and brought her in contact with the luminaries of the opera world—from Australian diva Nellie Melba to composer Jules Massenet. Convinced of their daughter's talent and work ethic, Blanche and Alonzo Ettinger had arranged for her to get high-quality vocal training in Chicago and then supported her plans to train and tour in Europe. But neither Alice Ettinger nor her parents could have imagined the adventures, accomplishments, and conflicts that lay ahead of the spirited teenager as her train pulled out of Iowa.

Alice Ettinger, later known as Rose Ettinger, was born in Illinois on February 10, 1877, to E. Blanche Ettinger, a singer and music teacher, and Alonzo L. Ettinger, a Civil War veteran and businessman. The family moved to Iowa in 1881 and settled in Waterloo in 1887. Alice Ettinger had two siblings, Victor, born in 1882, and Mabel, born in 1886.

The Waterloo of Alice Ettinger's youth was a growing city. The urban and industrial center of Black Hawk County, Waterloo expanded rapidly after 1870, with sawmills, flour mills, and retail businesses providing jobs and products for the burgeoning population. Alonzo Ettinger's career followed the expansion of the city. First working as a traveling salesman, he later became vice-president of the Black Hawk Coffee and Spice Company, which was founded in 1898 and eventually

shipped its coffee, tea, and spices to Minnesota and the Dakotas.

The completion of a railway line between Waterloo and Des Moines in 1884 increased the commercial fortunes of the city. By the 1890s the city supported a public library and a second opera house. (In 1889, Alice Ettinger, at age twelve, had sung with her mother at the east side opera house as part of a veterans' benefit.)

Blanche Ettinger's occupation as a music teacher and her daughter's career as a professional singer were increasingly common in the second half of the 19th century. Earlier in the century, many believed that music was a particularly feminine gift; a woman's supposedly sensitive, emotional nature was considered to be well suited to delicate musical expression. But a woman's seemingly natural musical affinity was to be used only to uplift her family and beautify her home, not for profit or public display. In the second half of the 19th century, however, women took advantage of new opportunities in music instruction and performance. In 1870 the U.S. Census reported that 60 percent of music teachers were female. Between 1870 and 1910, women's participation in "music and music teaching" increased from 36 percent to 66 percent. The "piano girl"—the dilettante who played primarily to catch a reputable husband or soothe her family members—was now eclipsed by the professional female singer, instrumentalist, teacher, or composer.

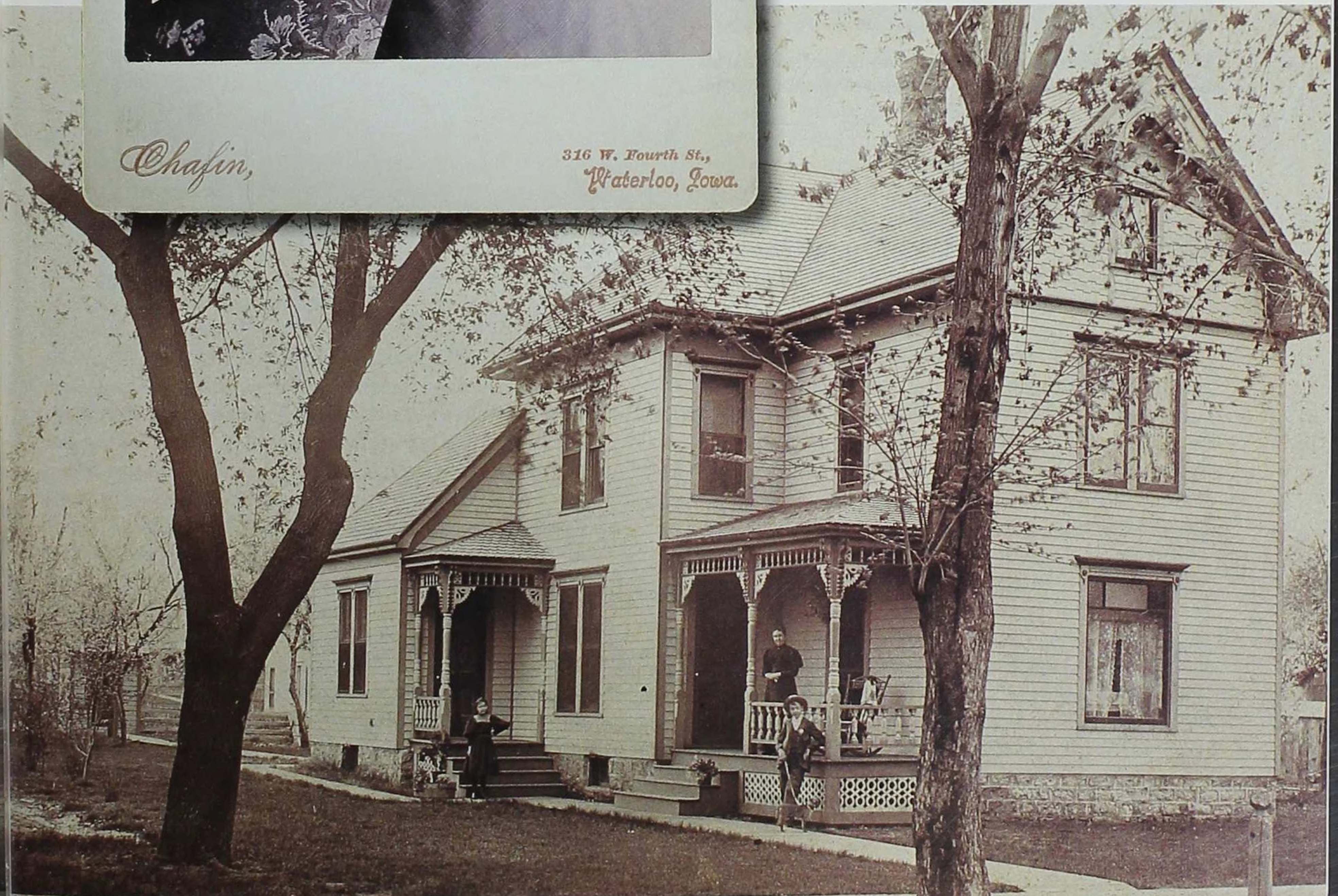
A new group of American singers, most trained in Europe, became successful prima donnas, touring both in the United States and abroad in the second half of



Alice Ida ("Rose") Ettinger left Waterloo, Iowa, in 1893 to study music in Chicago and later in Europe. Frequent letters to her family track her musical training, her performances in major European cities, and her growing confidence and maturity. (The collection of letters and photographs are in the Iowa Women's Archives, at the University of Iowa.) Below: her mother and siblings outside their Waterloo home.

*Chafin,*

316 W. Fourth St.,  
Waterloo, Iowa.





This undated portrait of Ettinger was taken in a Charles City, Iowa, studio probably before she left for training in Chicago.

the 19th century. Early stars Clara Louise Kellogg (1842–1916) and Adelina Patti (1843–1919) paved the way for many other women, including Emma Eames (1865–1952), Lillian Bauvelt (1874–1947), and Mary Garden (1874–1967). Missing from this traditionally recognized list of pioneering American singers is Iowa's Alice Ettinger. Although Ettinger was compared with Adelina Patti when she made her professional debut at the Trocadéro in Paris in 1896, her name is no longer mentioned when historians recall the achievements of prima donnas of this period. A closer look at her career sheds light on the new musical world for women around the turn of the century, and may restore this long-overlooked Iowan to her place in musical history.



ALTHOUGH PRIMA DONNAS of this period were often honored as stars and welcomed in elite circles, doubts persisted about women's physical and moral fitness for musical careers. Even the overwhelmingly

successful Swedish opera singer Jenny Lind had to defend herself against the stigma associated with women on stage. When Lind toured the United States for 18 months beginning in 1850, her manager, P. T. Barnum, tried to avoid the taint of immorality associated with theatrical women by advertising her as the "Swedish Nightingale" and a "musical saint." Later singers also carefully negotiated the issue of feminine propriety in their professional careers. For example, the American singer Clara Louise Kellogg, inspired by hearing one of Lind's concerts, still felt she had to defend her career choice to friends and family. Kellogg recalled that her mother "hated the atmosphere of the stage even though she had wished me to become a singer." Similarly, Alice Ettinger's path would show that a female singer's career could be a source of both pride and intense worry for family members: a woman's talent and fame still balanced precariously with morality and femininity.

By 1889 Ettinger was already regarded as "perhaps the finest little singer" in Waterloo. In 1893 in Chicago, she began her musical training with Sara Hershey Eddy, a singer and teacher who had founded the Hershey School of Musical Art in 1876. The wife of acclaimed organist Clarence Eddy, and the daughter of Benjamin Eddy, a businessman from Muscatine, Iowa, Sara Hershey Eddy helped plan the women's music section for the 1893 Chicago World's Fair. Recognizing that Ettinger was "more than commonly musical," the respected midwestern voice teacher agreed to become her teacher, even though Ettinger's parents could not afford the full fee. Eddy stipulated that the Ettingers would pay what they could. In turn, she required Alice's commitment to a full, systematic course of study (she could not be sure exactly how long it would take for Alice to become an "artist"). Payment of the remaining balance would come from Alice's professional earnings.

The strains of this arrangement were revealed in December 1893 when Sara Hershey Eddy and Blanche and Alonzo Ettinger debated Alice's character and commitment in several tense letters. Ettinger's parents objected to Eddy's accusation that she was not taking her music lessons seriously, that she was apathetic about her studies. "We know she is a conscientious student," Alonzo Ettinger retorted. "Her advancement in music at her age proves it. It is not all talent with Alice." Yet both Eddy and the Ettingers seemed to share the concern that Alice would let her early success go to her head. Alonzo Ettinger emphasized that he and his wife had taught Alice not to "base her talent on her vanity," guarding against the trend of many singers getting "so inflated with a little promise and flattery that the main point is lost sight of." The adults who sought to guide



Ettinger enjoyed a close relationship with teacher and mentor Sara Hershey Eddy (above) and her husband, Clarence, also a musician.

Alice's career thus weighed their investments against an uncertain future: her parents hoped that her family values would help her succeed without becoming spoiled in the competitive world of professional music, and Eddy hoped that her young pupil had the temperament and talent to repay the teacher's financial risks.

From the start, Ettinger's letters home expressed wonder and apprehension about her new urban life. Describing her train ride from Cedar Rapids to Chicago, Ettinger joked that, although she had "not been kidnapped yet!" she had rebuffed the attentions of a young

brakeman who shocked her by sitting down beside her: "I stared at him a minute but it did not disconcert him in the least & altho' I looked out of the window most of the time & gave him rather short answers to his many little inquiries and remarks he kept on talking & indeed sat beside me until we reached Rochelle. . . . He got no satisfaction out of me & I guess he thought me a poor customer for I neither told my name or where I hailed from."

Once settled in Chicago, Rose wrote home about other embarrassing incidents. When she was walking to get her mail two men on the street stared at her and called her "Sweet girl." "If any one else had been near to hear I don't know what I should have done for I felt so ashamed. I did not look at them at all but my face got hot I tell you. Oh my—funny things happen in a city." She was also shocked when her roommate stayed out late, and on one occasion, "didn't come home at all."

During her two years in Chicago, Ettinger steadily expanded her musical and social horizons. She learned new singing techniques during her lessons with Eddy and took pride in mastering her exercises. She conquered stage fright when she sang at a Baptist church in the city, telling her parents that "for the first time in my life I sang without one particle of fear or excitement." And she mingled with other female singers, including Lillian Russell, the beautiful star of musical comedy who was born in Clinton, Iowa, and raised in Chicago, and who, as Ettinger noted excitedly, was boarding nearby.



IN 1895, ETTINGER REACHED a crossroads in her musical training when Sara Hershey Eddy offered to take her to Europe for further training. When she initially wrote to her parents to propose the European trip, she explained that "Mrs. E. said it was the turning point of my life—I could either be a great artiste or not. . . . You see I'll amt. to something sure." Her parents consented, and Ettinger arrived in London with Sara and Clarence Eddy in July 1895. In Paris Ettinger began to study with Mathilde Marchesi, a famous German mezzo-soprano, who had a reputation for giving vocalists impeccable technical training. Marchesi's pupils were mainly women, including Nellie Melba, Emma Calvé, and Emma Eaves.

Ettinger reveled in her many successes. A few months after she began studying with Marchesi, Ettinger made a significant transition from vocal exercises to the interpretation of songs. Ettinger and her mother both thought it was time to move on. "I quite agree with you," she wrote to her mother in October 1895, "that I have done quite enough of ah-ing and assure you that both Mrs. E. and Marchesi think so too and there is no doubt but that I shall go ahead."

Then, on February 24, 1896, Ettinger made her debut at a recital for 200 guests in Marchesi's home. The youngest of Marchesi's students on the program, she sang scenes from *Lucia* and *Don Pasquale*. Following the successful concert, she was in ecstasy when Eddy gave her a diamond and sapphire ring. After describing the recital and ring in detail to her parents, Ettinger added, "Really, isn't it all like a fairy story, anyway? I sometimes wonder why it all is as it is and what it all means. People say 'lucky girl' and I guess that's it."

Two months later Ettinger performed on the same program as Clarence Eddy at the Trocadéro in Paris. Escorted on stage by Alexandre Guilmant, a respected French organist and composer, Ettinger offered songs from *The Pearl of Brésil* for an audience of 4,000. "When I saw all those 4000 faces," she recalled, "I was so happy I could hardly wait until it was time for me to strike the first note. I never dreamed of being frightened."



DESPITE HER EARLY SUCCESS, Ettinger's own concerns about the morality of female singers surfaced repeatedly in her career. She reasoned that she could become a school mistress or a governess, if she ever found singing too disreputable, and she also told her parents that female vocal students in Paris without enough money are "lost—ruined by the Frenchmen who I can assure you are not afraid of any American or any other creature that is a woman. Frenchmen are beasts and regard every woman as prey." Mary Garden, whose career overlapped Ettinger's, wrote that the "world is so cruel for a woman all alone! . . . One has to have a character of iron [to] stand up against it all and come out in the end as honest and pure as when I went into it!"

Such questions of sexual propriety and power in a woman's singing career were particularly prominent as Ettinger debated whether to focus on the concert stage or grand opera. In literature and art of the 19th century, the prima donna was often portrayed as a voraciously sexual woman who used her voice to seduce others. British author Henry Mayhew used "prima donna" and

## "I simply felt lovely"

### *A Debut in Paris*

**On May 13, 1896, Ettinger wrote this to her family:**

I feel that I must write to you all immediately and tell you that it is over and was the grandest success of my life! The Trocadero was full—fully 4,000 people being present. Mr. Eddy played better than ever and his part of the program was magnificent and was perfectly well executed and properly appreciated by the large and magnificent audience. How he does play and what an artist!

Mr. George Ellsworth Holmes of Chicago sang beautifully & had great success. I must put myself last but am quite willing to do so. My dears, don't think me conceited but I did have such marvellous success—my name will be celebrated in Paris for time to come. My first song with Violin obligato was of a style entirely different from anything I have ever done. Mr. Guilmant led me out—only think of it—you know that alone is an assurance for a singer as Alex. Guilmant is classed among the angels by the French. And when I saw all those 4000 faces I was so happy I could hardly wait until it was time for me to strike the first note. I never dreamed of being frightened. I simply felt lovely. At the end of the long cadenza with violin—which occupied one whole page there was a perfect thunder of applause. And then when I finished I was applauded [—] the echo & was obliged to come back & bow several times.

But the bird song from *The Pearl of Brésil* took the honors of the afternoon. I never heard anything like it—between every verse after every cadenza and in fact at every rest I never heard such applause & such cries of "brava" & etc. Well, it was simply lovely and of course I was recalled several times & everything was magnificent. The instant I got off the stage Guilmant turned to me & took both of my hands in his and said "it was perfect, my child—you have succeeded." & Mr. Eddy was so happy he embraced me on the spot. Baron de la Tombelle a French composer & a friend of Mr. Eddy's was lovely & said it was a marvel. Well, success it certainly was.

The instant it was over Marchesi & her husband & Mrs. Eddy all rushed to the green-room & embraced me & called me a darling & cried & all that. Marchesi & Mrs. Eddy's boxes were next to each other and Auntie [Mrs.

PALAIS DU TROCADERO

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*d'Orgue et Chant*

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Organiste à Chicago

Le MARDI 12 MAI 1896, à 2 heures et demie très précises

Avec le Concours de

M<sup>lle</sup> Rose ETTINGER

Élève de M<sup>me</sup> MARCHESI

MM. George HOLMES, Paul VIARDOT, Eugène AIGRE  
& Alexandre GUILMANT

### PROGRAMME

1. Morceau de Concert en mi b mineur. . . . . LOUIS THIELE
2. { A In Paradisum. . . . . } TH. DUBOIS  
 { B Fiat Lux. . . . . }
- M. Clarence EDDY.
3. Die heiden Grenadiere . . . . . WAGNER  
 M. George HOLMES.
4. Cinquième Sonate (Op. 80) . . . . . ALEX. GUILMANT  
 (Dédiée à CLARENCE EDDY.)  
 I. Allegro appassionato. — II. Adagio. — III. Scherzo. — IV. Recitativo.  
 V. Choral et Fugue.  
 M. Clarence EDDY.
5. Couplets du Mysoli (*La Perle du Brésil*). . . . . FÉLICIEN DAVID  
 Avec Flûte obligée.  
 M<sup>lle</sup> Rose ETTINGER. — M. Eugène AIGRE.
6. { A Prélude et Fugue en la mineur . . . . . J.-S. BACH  
 { B Variations de Concert sur le thème : *The Star*  
 { *Spangled Banner*. . . . . DUDLEY BUCK  
 M. Clarence EDDY.
7. { A Sehnsucht. . . . . OSCAR MEYER  
 { B Amore in Gondola . . . . . A. DE NEVERS  
 { C Thy beaming Eyes . . . . . MAC DOWELL  
 { D The Wooing . . . . . SIEVEKING  
 M. George HOLMES.
8. Et Vox angelorum respondet Domino (1<sup>re</sup> Audition). . . . . F. DE LA TOMBELLE
9. Aria de *Il Re Pastore*. . . . . MOZART  
 Avec Violon obligé.  
 M<sup>lle</sup> Rose ETTINGER. — M. Paul VIARDOT.
10. Fugue de Concert en sol majeur . . . . . J.-L. KREBS

On est instamment prié de ne pas entrer ni sortir pendant l'exécution des morceaux.

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Eddy] told me that the minute I had finished the Mysali she got up & started for Marchesi's box and met the latter coming to her box each one to congratulate the other!! So they kissed! About all the Artists in Paris came back to congratulate us and I never was so overwhelmed with compliments in my life. They said I was an angel—they said I had a voice like pearls—that no one knew when it was the flûte & when it was I singing—they said I was a Nilsson,

recently awakened the echos of that quiet place where solitude & darkness reigned. The Trocadéro holds 500 more seats than the Auditorium at Chicago so you see it is not small. I wish you could have heard, but you will hear me probably in the Auditorium before very long.

I must close.  
 Your loving daughter  
 Rose Ettinger

a Patti & in fact they said all sorts of things. Mrs. Eddy is so pleased. Now if only you could have dropped into that Trocadero & heard you [your?] naughty, little young me for a while maybe I wouldn't have been a happy girl. As it is I am trying to give a graphic account of proceedings. Please keep this letter and all others pertaining to concerts in which I sing, won't you!

I carried a program out with me each time I sang in order to have something to hold and I send it to you for I think it is nice to keep the one I used while I "did the deed." It is crumpled! After it all I went to the Hotel Calais with the Eddy's. We had a big dinner & they all drank champagne to my health & we all did to each other.

So endeth this chapter of my life. I am going to sing at Dr. Middleton's at home next Sunday. How lovely of the Eddy's to give me such an extraordinarily fine opportunity of making my début. I just think Mr. Eddy is a dear to have done it. As we drove home in the moonlight last night—we came by that grand building the Trocadéro & everything was so quiet & peaceful it hardly seemed possible to either Mr. Eddy or to me that we had so



Once in Europe, Ettinger began to sprinkle French phrases throughout her letters to her family, as she does in this message on a photograph sent to her sister, Mabel. "You will certainly think me affected when I get home," she writes to her family in May 1896, "for I cannot say a dozen sentences in English without having French words come in. They are so handy. I cannot talk without them."

"prostitute" interchangeably in his 19th-century writing, and many sexually explicit "memoirs" were falsely touted as the authentic exploits of well-known singers. Male opera impresarios, furthermore, had bad reputations for attempting to trade lucrative engagements for sexual favors. A female singer had to consider her reputation and physical well-being carefully when making this choice, as Ettinger's explanation reveals: "To be a Grand opera singer is simply to give up all kind of life—you have no home, no liberty, no character, (and I know now that good as a woman may be she cannot be virtuous as an opera singer if she expects to make a success.) . . . Marchesi says she would rather see a daughter of hers dead than an opera singer. And at present I would not be strong enough physically for the work."

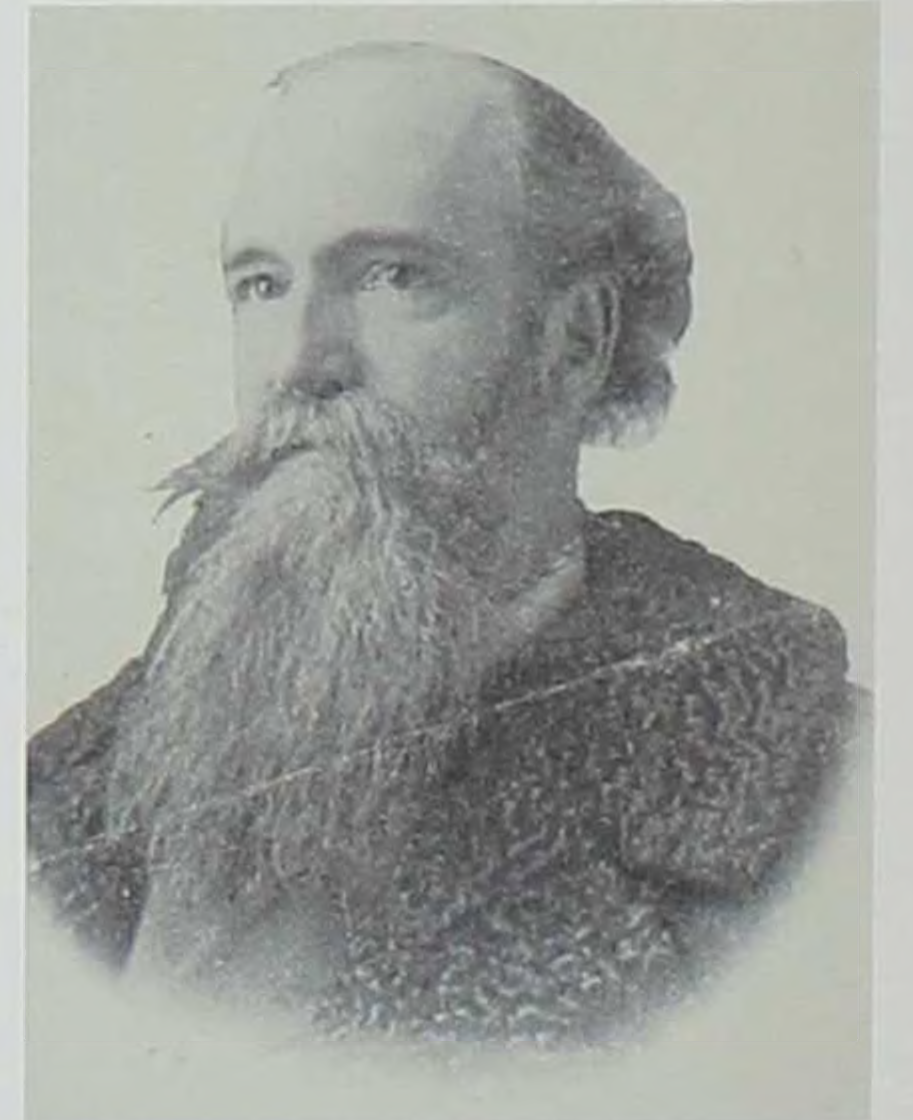
Ettinger, though, again entertained the idea of a grand opera career when Nellie Melba arranged for her to sing before the French opera composer Jules Massenet (1842–1912) in September 1896. After her performance for him, Ettinger was swept away by his compliments. Massenet told Ettinger her voice was "extremely rare" and her execution was "marvellous," and he encouraged her to pursue roles in *The Barber of Seville* and *La Traviata*. "From such a great man it means so much," Ettinger exclaimed to her parents. "Think what it means—"

Massenet's praise was indeed seductive. Ettinger confided to her parents that as he complimented her, he came so close to her that she "thought he was going to look right down my throat." Then he asked her if she had ever kissed Mme. Melba, and she said, "No, I have never had that pleasure." "I am so sorry," he replied, "I would like very much to do it myself but I don't dare but if you will permit me I will give you a kiss and then you can give to her!" Then Massenet kissed her.

It is difficult to interpret this kiss. Ettinger seems to have found it charming rather than threatening. On Massenet's part, it may have been a combination of professional and sexual advances to young singers; the prolific composer was known to be infatuated with American Sybil Sanderson and later Lucy Arbell, writing roles for both of them.

Overwhelmed by Massenet, Ettinger again expressed a desire for a career in grand opera. She made her opera debut in January 1897 and was offered a contract with an opera company, but she turned down this offer. Instead, she launched a concert tour in the fall with engagements in Leipzig, Berlin, Amsterdam, and other European cities.

Everywhere, the response was tremendous. "The peculiar thing about her voice," wrote Clarence Eddy, "is that it is a pure soprano of great range; it not only runs very high—an octave above high C, with a good tone, but the middle and low tones are remarkably full.



SHSI (IOWA CITY)

**Organist Clarence Eddy and his wife oversaw Ettinger's training and career and arranged contacts with prominent musicians. In many letters, Ettinger calls the Eddys "Aunt" and "Uncle."**

In fact, it is so good that Mme. Marchesi, when she first received her, told her it was the only voice that had ever come to her that was perfectly placed."

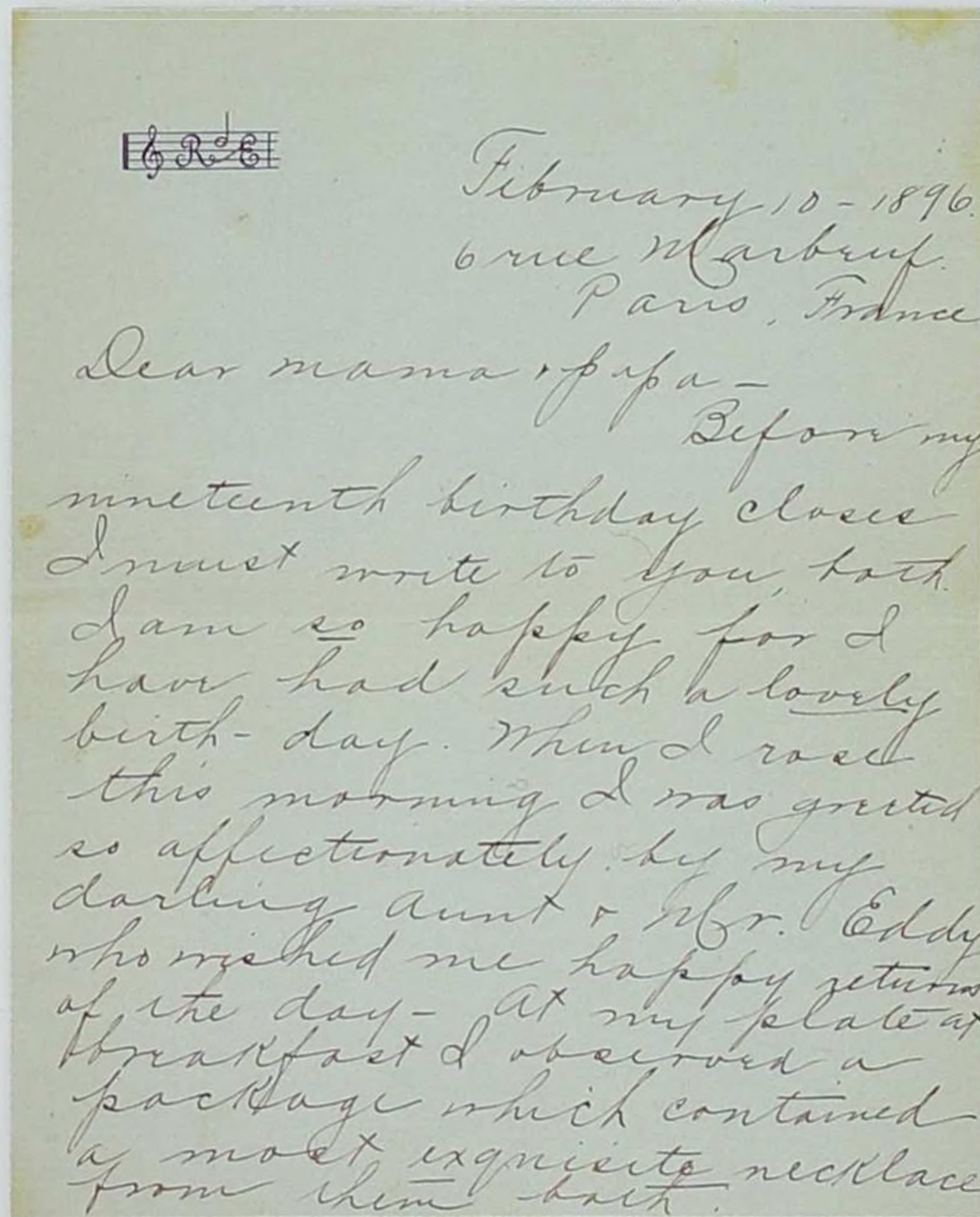


ALONG WITH FACING ACCUSATIONS of immorality, female singers also struggled with the physical demands of pursuing artistic excellence and society's presumption that women were too weak for professional careers. Ettinger conceded to her parents that "it is a hard life . . . [but] to the outsiders . . . who only see you come before them in pretty clothes, sing as if it were a mere pastime, receive flowers and compliments and money it is all very deluding." She reported regularly to her parents about her physical health and described her problems—headaches, colds, tension, and exhaustion. Even when she felt well, she hoped for more strength. "I wish I were stronger," she declared in 1897. "I am perfectly well but I should like the strength of a man."

To her family back in Waterloo, Ettinger bragged of her achievements and activities outside of music; she relished the excitement of her increasingly independent life. She learned how to speak French in 1895, noting that she could become a French teacher if she lost her voice. A few years later she learned to swim, calling this "one more accomplishment to add to my list." In a new riding outfit of bloomers and jacket, she bicycled with friends. Now savvy and sought-after, she relished the attention she received from admiring men, including a tenor and a middle-aged, divorced doctor. Although she did not want to fall in love, she told her parents, "I don't have to keep myself shut up in order to keep my heart. . . . I'm having too pleasant a life to tie myself to anybody just yet."

As she grew more confident on stage, in urban situations, and in European society, she nevertheless reaffirmed her ties to her parents in many ways. She still sought their approval and assured them that her character had not been corrupted by her worldly experiences. Ettinger tried to assuage her parents' concern that she was becoming conceited and perhaps "unfeminine" with her new level of self-confidence. "It is only natural," she wrote defensively in 1896, "that I should take some pride in making for myself a place and in doing my best, and in having success." And, responding to her parents' concerns about her romantic interests, she explained, "Really, I am not at all a flirt nor anything of the kind—*au contraire*—I am decidedly staid and quite too dignified to suit my friends."

Ettinger also expressed some ambivalence about the



Ettinger's letter to her parents in February 1896 bears a musical monogram for "Rose Ettinger"—not Alice Ettinger. "I do so wish you liked to call me Rose," she wrote her parents. "It is such a smart name in every tongue."

great distance she had traveled from her family in Iowa. In October 1895 she congratulated her parents for having helped to close saloons in Iowa (they supported temperance) and then explained to them that "we have wine and cognac on the table all the time—everybody does." To put their minds at ease, she added, "I do not drink it for I don't care particularly about it."



BEGINNING IN 1895, Alice Ida Ettinger began to refer to herself as Rose Ettinger, a stage name that Sara Hershey Eddy encouraged her to adopt because of its cosmopolitan ring and its lyrical sound in French and Italian as well as English. Her parents were reluctant to call her Rose, and for some time Ettinger herself seemed ambivalent about the change. Between 1895 and 1897 she alternated between signing Rose and Alice on her letters home, and she frequently referred to herself as "Alice Rose," perhaps indicating regrets about her new professional European persona. In 1897, however, she





UNDATED PHOTOGRAPH TAKEN IN BERLIN. IOWA WOMEN'S ARCHIVES, SPECIAL COLLECTIONS, UNIVERSITY OF IOWA LIBRARIES (IOWA CITY)

finally set the record straight in a letter to her parents: "From this time forth I will no more answer to the name of either Alice nor Ida. I have chosen to call myself Rose Ettinger a name which in all foreign tongues is exceedingly distinguished. . . . I take the name as my *nom de plume* and I will not be known as Alice Ettinger any more."

The family tensions surrounding Ettinger's independence erupted most dramatically in November 1898, when she announced her intention to become engaged to Francis Braun, a baritone and the son of English contralto Marie Brema. Anticipating her parents' concerns about her professional future, she told them that she wanted a long engagement because both she and Braun needed to continue developing their singing careers. "[We] do not entertain the least idea of marrying for a long time to come," she wrote to her parents. "Francis is an artist but he has not yet made a public appearance and he has a great deal to accomplish and much work before him. . . . I myself do not wish to marry for several years and he understands this and is quite willing to wait for me. . . . You need not think this is going to interfere with my work because I've worked harder and improved more since I've known Francis than ever before."

Alonzo and Blanche Ettinger may have been surprised by this engagement announcement because, since her debut in 1895, Ettinger had promised her family and the Eddys that she would be prudent and patient in her romantic life. Early in 1898 she had written to her mother, "I know you have always had a horror of my marrying and now here I am . . . without any prospect of a husband. Aren't you glad? I am, & probably I shall live to be a nice old maid."

It may seem odd that a woman in the late 19th century would be pressured by her family *not* to marry, considering that marriage and motherhood were still considered women's natural destiny and ideal social fulfillment. Ettinger was well aware of the traditional roles for women and reflected often on her unconventional path. She assured her parents, for example, that despite her nontraditional life, she would still be devoted to them: "I think you'll have me just as much as if I were like the generality of girls, married to some fellow and having a baby every year or nine months as the case may be & doing house work during spare time. . . . I hope sincerely I won't be the same. I can assure you if there is a possibility of my rising above the ordinary every day affairs & making something beyond what the average girl is of myself I'm going to do it."

Ettinger's engagement did not receive the encouragement and celebration that an ordinary young woman would have expected. Ettinger's mother had earned

money for the family from her music, and she and her husband seemed to have expected their daughter to have an even more lucrative musical career. In this sense, Ettinger was among those male and female artists and musicians who, though they were not working class, expected to and needed to perform for money. A study of 36 European women singers of the 19th century, for example, shows that most continued to work after their marriages. Only four retired from public life when they married (and two of these came out of retirement), and five changed their careers in some way, turning to teaching rather than performing, for example, or to concert work rather than operatic tours. Though Ettinger was perhaps emboldened by the many married women who continued to perform professionally, her parents may have been equally concerned that her marriage would compromise her career in some way. Her professional future, personal happiness, and family loyalty thus clashed again at this crossroads in her life.

Sara Hershey Eddy also opposed the engagement, allegedly telegramming Ettinger that "[I] can do nothing more for you; the fiancée of Braun does not interest me." Ettinger's relationship with Eddy had soured considerably around the time that Ettinger began to mention Braun as a special friend in her letters home. In 1898, ten months prior to the announcement of her engagement, she wrote that Eddy had "made me awfully unhappy many times. I am too independent now for her ever to do so any more."

Now Eddy offered to continue booking Ettinger's engagements only if she would refuse contact with Braun for two years and repay her debt to Eddy in that time. Instead of accepting Eddy's proposal, Ettinger allowed Francis Braun's father to repay Eddy, thus ending her obligations to her longtime mentor.

Ettinger now had to placate her parents, who believed that the rift with Eddy left their daughter in a compromising situation. She lacked a chaperone, and she was perhaps dangerously indebted to this suitor because his father was providing her with financial support. In a draft of a long letter to their daughter the Ettingers wrote, "To us the thought that our daughter may be without the necessary means of support or placed in a position where she may be obliged to accept help from the hands of Col. Braun who so kindly offered is extremely distressing."

"I'm not a child and I know what I'm about," the 22-year-old Ettinger complained. "I wish I could convince papa and you that I am not a dove caught in the snares of a thief and a scoundrel in disguise. After I've been married ten years and have children I expect though to still be asked if I've decided right."

Her parents even suspected that Ettinger was marrying Braun for his money. Ettinger's letters did not completely dispel their suspicions: "If Francis had nothing and no such relations I should love him just the same and be just as contented in his love but it is sweet to have them rich and able and anxious to give you everything."

In Francis Braun, Ettinger seemed to have found romantic love as well as a family that could offer professional development, financial backing, and some encouragement for women's independence. Ettinger, in fact, had hoped for such a match years earlier: "When I get married," she wrote three years prior to her marriage, "it will be because I think it advisable, financially, socially & etc. to some agreeable old fellow with lots of money & a big house who will let me do as I please."

Ettinger would find not only financial security but also an impressive role model in her mother-in-law. Braun's mother was a soprano who had become a member of the Metropolitan Opera Company in 1895. She had continued her career after her marriage to Col. Braun, a successful Liverpool merchant—though she disguised her marital status by performing as "Miss Marie Brema." Brema, the vice-president of the Actresses' Franchise League, was also a well-known supporter of women's political causes.

Although Ettinger had angrily broken away from Eddy and had strongly defended her marriage to her parents, she was also childlike in her search for her parents' approval. A month before her wedding she wrote to them: "Above all I am miserable because you all so disapprove of my getting married! . . . Do not be angry with me please," she begged. As she pleaded for their support, Ettinger began to sign her name as "Alice" again. And although she displayed her stubborn, inde-



Once married to Francis Braun, Rose continued to perform.

pendent spirit many times in her debate with her parents, she also defended her marriage to her parents on quite traditional grounds: "I'll be happy and have somebody to take care of me and who will have a right to look after me." She also expressed some misgivings

♥ **These few excerpts from Alice ("Rose") Ettinger's frequent letters to her family in Waterloo, Iowa, reveal her strong family ties, delight in new experiences, and growing confidence and independence.** —The Editor

[July 20, 1895]

Dear mother—

I have no news to write now for I've just got one letter off but I feel like writing so I'll scribble off a letter. . . .

I think the singing at the Chautauqua must have been exceedingly tame. You could undoubtedly have excelled Miss Carter. When you are strong enough why don't you work it all up again. Don't you find time?

I have a lovely new waist. Dear Mrs. Eddy found it ready made down town and bought it and made me a present of

it. It is some kind of thin summer goods—lavender with a little purple flower in it and is made with smocking. Very pretty and most becoming.

I am very glad to hear that Waterloo has at last decided to indulge in a new Opera House. But I fear I won't be there to open it. However I won't worry for it will probably not be done for several years—if it takes them as long to build it as it has taken them to make up their minds to build it we may not [any] of us ever live to see it completed. . . .

I didn't celebrate at all the 4th. Hadn't a single fire cracker. . . .

No, I don't have any headaches and I'm perfectly well. Have grown very much plumper—my dresses are all getting tight again. My appetite is something astonishing for I assure you I eat 6 regular meals a day.

about her separation from her family, writing that "when I get my children, if ever I have any and I hope I may, they will stay with their ma and pa." A conflicted Ettinger sought the love and protection of Braun as well as of her own parents; she also needed the safety of Braun's affection and his family's financial backing for her to escape from the Eddys' control. The independence she craved was indeed elusive.

After Ettinger married Braun on December 7, 1899, she continued to perform. In Hamburg in November 1903, she was one of four soloists performing Mozart's C Minor Mass. After her solo, the audience—as well as the orchestra and chorus—broke with convention and interrupted the mass with their ovation for her. Among the many accolades she received in her career following her marriage was a medal of science and art awarded to her in 1905 following a concert in Dessau, Germany. She thus combined a professional career and a seemingly happy marriage—a difficult, but not unprecedented accomplishment for a woman of her class during this period. Ettinger died in May 1909 at age 31 of a cerebral hemorrhage.



AS ETTINGER HAD WORKED to establish her career, she had enjoyed prestigious teachers, acclaimed performances, expensive clothes and jewels, and adventures in the great European capitals. But grueling vocal exercises, exhausting travel, and conflicts with both Eddy and her parents also tested the talented singer. Emerging from the conquests and compromises of her career, she was no longer the Iowa girl who in 1895 was enthralled by yet fearful of Chicago. Nor was she the music

student with a touch of stage fright. Although she realized the great distance of her journey, she still treasured her loyalty to her family, to Iowa, and to the girl she had been: "The world over here is so different and my life is so utterly different from yours in Waterloo that I fear I have changed a great deal and can't see things as I used to do," she wrote regretfully to her parents from Zurich in 1899, "but at heart I'm not different." ❖

*The author, M. Alison Kibler, is the author of Rank Ladies: Gender and Cultural Hierarchy in American Vaudeville (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999). Her dissertation (University of Iowa, 1994) was "Female Varieties: Gender and Cultural Hierarchy on the Keith Vaudeville Circuit, 1890–1925." She is currently a visiting fellow in the history department at the Australian National University.*

#### NOTE ON SOURCES

The Rose Ettinger Collection at the Iowa Women's Archives, Special Collections, University of Iowa Libraries (Iowa City) comprises letters from Ettinger to her family in Waterloo, Iowa, along with photographs and clippings. Secondary sources include Christine Ammer, *Unsung: A History of Women in American Music*, Contributions in Women's Studies, 14 (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1980); Adrienne Fried Block with Nancy Stewart, "Women in American Music, 1800–1918," in *Women and Music*, ed. Karin Pendle (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991); Nancy B. Reich, "Women as Musicians: A Question of Class" in *Musicology and Difference: Gender and Sexuality in Music Scholarship*, ed. Ruth Solie (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993); Susan Rutherford, "The Voice of Freedom: Images of the Prima Donna," *The New Woman and Her Sisters: Feminism and Theatre, 1850–1914*, ed. Vivien Gardner and Susan Rutherford (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1992); Judith Tick, "Passed Away Is the Piano Girl: Changes in American Musical Life, 1870–1900" in *Women Making Music: The Western Art Tradition, 1150–1950*, ed. Jane Bowers and Judith Tick (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986). Also useful were Edward T. James et al., eds., *Notable American Women: A Biographical Dictionary* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971); and Don M. Randel, ed., *The Harvard Biographical Dictionary of Music* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard, 1996).

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[October 21, 1895]

My new clothes are finished & now I have but to have some white corset covers & skirts & some woolen stockings & the wardrobe is complete.

The underwear I am to have made to order. My new corsets are something blissful. I enclose another little piece of my street dress & also a piece of the silk. The silk is trimmed with kind of a crushed plush which is very beautiful & very fashionable. It is made with a full front & very large full sleeves and a belt & collar of the plush. It is simple but perfectly made & simply ravishing. The other dress is very elegant & I look like quite a stunning French girl. Will send samples to Grandma also.

I am so glad you have such a pretty hat & I hope you will buy a nice cape too for I know you need it. Do you

Between breakfast & lunch I always hunt up Fred—the oldest son—& together we make our way to the larder & together we eat bread and jam. Pickles & etc. disappear mysteriously. And we usually repeat this performance just before we go to bed.

Yes, I do lots of bathing. Never did so much in my life—a hot bath when I go to bed & a cold one when I get up.

I don't feel qualified to write for any newspaper. And as I don't care to have my letters shown around town, I think people will have to come to you for information concerning your chicken—I don't understand why people take such extraordinary interest in me anyway because I am simply doing common ordinary things toward getting on in the world....

Yours as ever  
Rose

think you are equal to all the housework? But if you have what you spoke of done by outsiders—like washing, ironing & cleaning it will not be so hard. Only don't get sick again. . . .

[November 1, 1895]

Dear papa & mama,

This is my first letter from my new home. Have been extremely busy of course for I have had packing, moving and settling to do. Your letters of the 12th. & 13th. of Oct. reached me in due time and yesterday the two of the 17th. & 18th. arrived with the enclosed check for which I thank you. I shall enjoy using it but I felt after I asked for it that it was wrong for me to do so as it was not necessary. However—I'm very much obliged.

I moved to Mrs. Eddy's Tuesday and am now quite settled in my new abode. It is a charming place—everything is of the very nicest. I never lived in anything half so beautiful. The salon is beautifully finished & Mr. Eddy has a grand piano there and I have one—not a grand in my room.

My room is large & everything convenient even to private W.C. and toilette room, closets & etc.

I wonder why I have such a lovely time—I can't understand it for it seems so strange and all like a dream. Marchesi called last night and she & Mrs. E. talked me over. I didn't see her but she left a kiss for me which was delivered by Mrs. E. Now I'll tell you what she said. At last we know something definite. I am to study until next June on the Grand Arias. After that one year on roles & Marchesi says that will finish me. And she told Mrs. Eddy that I would be then a "great artiste." So now you know all. . . .

Lovingly your daughter  
Alice Rose Ettinger

[November 29, 1895]

Your letter of Nov. 17th is just at hand. Please don't let my progress or course of study worry you. Though I intend in the end to make Grand Opera my profession—I do not at present think anything of that. I am simply studying hard and learning to sing as well as possible & you can rest assured that all will be well for Mr. & Mrs. Eddy & Marchesi & all the best authority on earth & they are doing all in their power for me & I am simply going to work & I know everything will be well in the end. I've come over here to study as long as is necessary and I'm going to do it whether it takes 2 years or 10. Goodness think of the advantages I have! It is simply unheard of—and I don't know of another such case on record. And I think when people say such things as mama wrote in her last letter about "your never having me again and you'll have to give me up to the world & when she does come back she won't be the same" you'd better tell them [it] is none of their affairs. . . .

And if people think I ought to set myself down in

Waterloo & sing at their sociables for the rest of my life when by simply putting out my hand & taking it I can have every thing there is to be had worth having they are grandly mistaken and I haven't much love for people who will talk so. Its all very well for folks who can't do anything to think others should follow their example but I prefer other things. I know you quite agree with me or I wouldn't express myself so freely. And I hope you will all have confidence in me & know that I am going to do my best and so far as any great change taking place in my nature (or whatever they mean) I want you to feel assured that it will not be so although of course people, should they see outward changes (which I devoutly hope they will) will think I'm another person & I don't care. They don't know me & they don't know any of us & it don't matter either.

Mrs. Eddy said when she left Muscatine to come away to study a man said to her, "do you fully realize what you are doing? do you know that this step will change the course of your whole life?" "Yes," said Mrs. Eddy "I do, that's just what I'm going for—I want to change my life and to improve myself & rise to my utmost."

Well, I've written enough for once, on this subject. But I felt it & I had to say what I thought.

4 P.M.

I meant to add more to this & tell you about our Thanksgiving dinner yesterday but I have been so busy I haven't had a chance. And as it is late I must mail it at once. Have spent most of the day at the Dentist's. Am having a lot of work done & am being about Killed. Lovingly Yours Rose

[December 16, 1895]

There was one lady here whom we met at Cedar Rapids 3 years ago—Miss Snyder. She is here studying music & is perfectly charming. Of course I did not remember her at first but I do now. She spoke of you & was very complimentary for she thought you so lovely & thought we were so devoted to each other. After the evening was nearly over she said—"You are simply beautiful & I don't wonder Mr. & Mrs. Eddy are so proud of you & you are the same smart, innocent girl that you were 3 years ago—how do you do it—really you are a wonder Miss Ettinger." Quite an extensive compliment, *n'est ce pas?* . . .

[December 28, 1895]

First I must tell you about the Christmas fun. We had a Christmas tree—or rather Mr. Eddy had it, i.e. he did all the work.

Of course no one was allowed to even get a sight of it and he kept it in his room. Well, he intended to move it into the Dining room, but when he got it finished it was so big it would not go through the doors so we were obliged to have it in his room. Well, if we didn't have fun! At about

9 P.M. Mrs. Eddy and I were invited in & it was a beauty and Mr. Eddy is as grand a success at fixing Xmas trees as if he had had a "Baby" all his life to fix them for. (It always makes me smile to have them call me that but they do—call me Babe very often!)

Well, this tree was loaded with things. (Mrs. E. & I got one of the maids to smuggle our things in too.) Then we sat down close by and investigated. Truly I never got so many things in all my life before at one time! I'll try to tell you all—From Mr. Eddy I got a Calendar. It is in Green Leather & Silver & has the days of the mo. & wk., a thermometer & a clock all combined.

2nd., a diary for 1896 with my name engraved on it. Also another little book bound very prettily.

3rd., a letter opener & paper cutter of very pretty design. And a pretty little box for stamps—it has separate compartments for all kinds of stamps. A beautiful ink-stand—one that I can travel about with the ink in it & it won't spill.

A big box of confectionary, a smart little hand painted plate—a fancy box for little things and a little piano—the back of which is filled with—chocolates!

I believe that's about all. Well, from Mrs. Eddy I rec'd six volumes of Longfellow—beautifully bound. They are really lovely & such nice little books to read out of. And her other two presents were jewelry for she knows I like it. One is a beautiful pin, & very rare. It is a tiny little painting, on porcelain, of two cherubs & flowers. Very little & simply exquisite and is set around (irregularly) with diamonds of a good size. It is a beauty but not so striking as the other gift which are two side-combs for the hair. They are of shell & on the backs are designs of diamonds set in gold! . . .

I gave Mrs. Eddy my photograph set in the most lovely enamel frame I ever saw. Mr. E. selected it & she was charmed with it. And I gave Mr. Eddy a large & very fine book containing views of all the Cathedrals in France. He was much pleased.

Well I must get this ready to mail—Your letters are awfully welcome & I love to get them.

I hope you all had a merry Xmas & got my photo & the cards.

With all the love in the world

Yours Ever

Rose

[January 26, 1896]

This evening I am going with the Eddy's to a dinner at Theodore Dubois' the great French composer. He is a way up man & it is an honor to be invited to his house so I feel somewhat elated. His wife is charming.

I think you must be quite busy with your Church, Social & Domestic work. I hope you are not trying too much. It really seems terrible to me that you do the house work. Can't you get a girl to do that—it seems as if you

ought to get a maid & the money you give her would be made up to you in strength and health. . . .

I think you are all really crazy if you write me such absurd nonsense about my losing my heart. Just because I like society & enjoy admiration is no reason why either I or the admirers should be in love. . . .

[March 22, 1896]

The weather is simply heavenly. Everything is so beautiful; all the trees are leafing out, and the small ones & the shrubs are so beautifully green—and the cherry, apple & peach trees are loaded with blossoms. It is simply exquisite. It is warm like summer & we sit about with the windows all open—*ah, que c'est beau. J'adore le Printemps.*

I hear from my aunt [Mrs. Eddy] that Nice is perfect for of course there everything is perfect and they say it is more like summer than anything else. . . .

Have you ever read Trilby? I have just finished it & think it a sweet story but the ending is so horrible I cannot like it so well as I should if the ending had been less harrowing. I realize that I am very much behind the times reading it now but for some reasons I am glad for I have a much better appreciation of it now that I know Paris & French, than I could possibly have had before.

Yes, when I am unusually excited—as for instance I was when writing up the Marchesi recital—I do occasionally call Mr. Eddy Uncle. Don't think he objects my dear friend, for he doesn't at all. He doesn't mind having me for a relative in the least only as Auntie says & I think it's true—he doesn't like to be called Uncle for he hates to feel that he is old enough to have a niece my age!! So when I want to be real naughty & tease my poor "Uncle" & amuse my dear Aunt beyond anything else—I just say "Uncle" & he usually leaves off what he's doing & chases me out of the room. But just forget it & don't worry for I'm horribly circumspect and the last thing I shall ever do will be to shock my (new) relations. (The old ones are past being shocked—they expect anything under heavens!)

Am so glad you bought that lot. Property is such a good investment in America. . . .

You must have very jolly times all by yourselves. I am very anxious to see you all! Especially at times I get streaks such streaks & then I recover until I get another! But I am happy & I am doing my duty. When the leaves are out & the plums in blossom won't you have some photos of the house. I should like one & I always used to think it looked so pretty as you looked at it from Clausen's corner. . . .

How lovely it will be to have electric lights at home—perfectly fine. I am so glad you like the new photos. . . .

I am as ever

Yours

Rose