

UP FRONT



ITALIAN AMERICAN COLLECTION

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Italian American Program

The Music Man: Andrea Mazzotti

When we think of what Italian immigrant men did for work in Pittsburgh during the first half of the 20th century, we more than likely imagine miners, laborers, and mill workers toiling for long hours. We may also picture those with trades, such as cobblers and barbers, or those who ran small businesses or peddled goods. What was not as common, but certainly not out of the ordinary, were Italian men earning a living as professional artists and musicians.

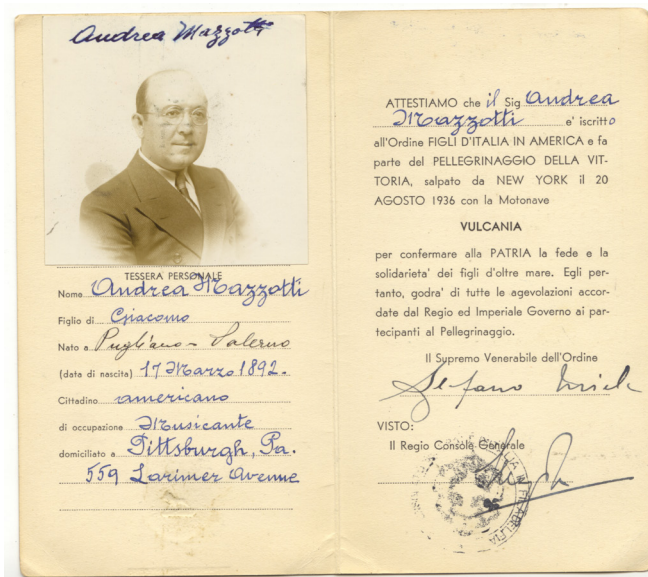
Andrea Mazzotti was born in the town of Montecorvino Pugliano, near Salerno, in the

Italian region of Campania, and immigrated to Pittsburgh in 1912 at the age of 21. Trained as a professional musician in Italy, he specialized in playing the euphonium, also known as the tenor tuba; his first instrument was the violin, but he switched to brass instruments for fear that his fingers were too short to be a skillful violinist. He worked for various bands throughout the region, occasionally conducting his own band, and tutored aspiring students of music in violin and trumpet at Volkwein Brothers' Studio and out of his home in East Liberty.

Mazzotti was a dues-paying member of

the Pittsburgh Musical Society's Local 60 and, most notably, he was session musician for the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra under conductors Antonio Modarelli (another local Italian American) and Dr. Fritz Reiner.¹ Under Dr. Reiner, he played tenor tuba in *Don Quixote* at the Syria Mosque in 1941 with famed Russian American cellist Gregor Piatigorsky, the recording of which is now housed in the Italian American Collection in the History Center's Detre Library & Archives.² Besides working as a musician, Mazzotti also worked at Kaufmann's as a tailor upon his arrival to the United States and at Knights Life Insurance Company of America selling life insurance from 1943 until his death in 1948.

Mazzotti's daughter, Norina H. Daubner, donated a telling collection of artifacts and archives to the Italian American Collection related to her father's career. Since Mazzotti died unexpectedly when his only child was nine, much of what we know about his work as a musician is verified and enhanced by an investigation of his archives, which includes a variety of sheet music, correspondences, photographs, recordings, and a diary. The sampling of sheet music from the 1920s, '30s, and '40s is representative of Mazzotti's versatility as a musician and a music teacher; a



Left:
Andrea Mazzotti's identification from the Order of the Sons of Italy, issued in 1936 for a voyage to Italy on the Italian ocean liner *Vulcania*. His profession is labeled as "musician."

HHC Detre L&A, Andrea Mazzotti Papers, MSS 1077, gift of Norina H. Daubner.

Below:
Andrea Mazzotti (right) performs in Frank Cervone's Band at Kennywood's Golden Jubilee celebration, 1947.

HHC Detre L&A, Andrea Mazzotti Papers, MSS 1077, gift of Norina H. Daubner.



selection of polkas, waltzes, symphonies, Italian music, and American popular music was kept for decades after his death by his wife, Rose Rinaldi Mazzotti, an accomplished mandolin player. This assortment affirms his daughter's recollection that he was an avid collector of music and that live and recorded music was always playing in their East Liberty home.

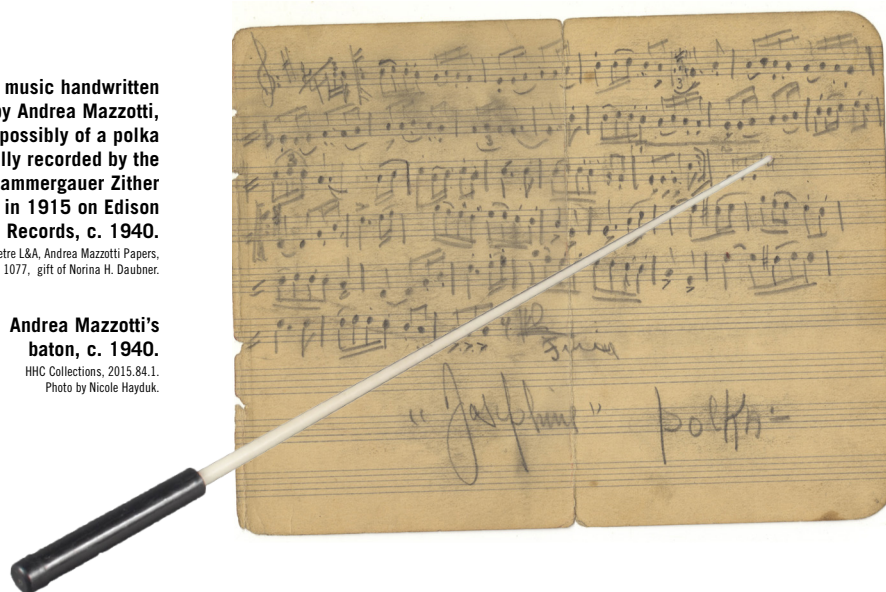
One of the noteworthy aspects of the Mazzotti archives is what the content reveals about Andrea Mazzotti's attitude toward his naturalized American citizenship. Unable to participate in the draft during World War II, Mazzotti actively contributed to the homefront effort through his musical talents in the Works Progress Administration War Bond Band led by Pierre de Bacher.³ According to his agenda from 1942, he played in war bond rallies almost daily, sometimes twice a day. In a comparison between Mazzotti's planner and a schedule of war bond rallies published in the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* on June 13, 1942, one can see how the two calendars align. That week Mazzotti played at the rallies at the City-County Building on Monday, Old Post Office on Smithfield Street on Tuesday, 9th Street and Liberty Avenue on Wednesday, across from the YMCA on Wood Street on Thursday, at Penn Avenue and Stanwix Street on Friday, and in Kaufmann's parking lot on Saturday.⁴ Mazzotti's dedication to the WPA War Bond Band came as no surprise to those who knew him; in his obituary published by the *Official Journal Pittsburgh Musical Society*, Mazzotti was remembered as "a loyal citizen to the end of his days. He took an active interest in politics and thought every voter should do the same."⁵

Sheet music handwritten
by Andrea Mazzotti,
possibly of a polka
originally recorded by the
Oberammergau Zither
Trio in 1915 on Edison
Records, c. 1940.

HHC Detre L&A, Andrea Mazzotti Papers,
MSS 1077, gift of Norina H. Daubner.

Andrea Mazzotti's
baton, c. 1940.

HHC Collections, 2015.84.1.
Photo by Nicole Hayduk.



Above:
Andrea Mazzotti conducting
his band, c. 1940.

HHC Detre L&A, Andrea Mazzotti Papers, MSS 1077,
gift of Norina H. Daubner.

Left:
Piece of Pittsburgh Pirates
sheet music that exemplifies
the variety of music Andrea
Mazzotti collected.

HHC Detre L&A, Andrea Mazzotti Papers, MSS 1077,
gift of Norina H. Daubner.

¹ "In Memoriam," *Official Journal Pittsburgh Musical Society* (June 1948): 6. Mazzotti Collection, 2015.88, Detre L&A, Heinz History Center.

² *The Pittsburgh Symphony Society Season 1941-42*. Mazzotti Collection, 2015.88, Detre L&A, Heinz History Center.

³ "Minute Men Hold Street Bond Rally," *The Pittsburgh Press*, June 5, 1942.

⁴ "War Bond Rallies Listed for Week," *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, June 13, 1942.

⁵ "In Memoriam," 6.