

CastaDiva: a moment in the spotlight

By Saxon Henry



The Italian resort infuses music into the Lake Como landscape



You can almost hear the rustle of delicate satin as you stroll through Villa Roccabruna at the CastaDiva Resort in Lake Como, Italy. The luxurious interiors of this former summer residence of acclaimed soprano Giuditta Pasta evoke a bygone time when the sweep of the opera singer's gowns would have trailed behind her as she descended the spiral staircase. The resort made musical history when it brought together the opera singer and smitten composer Vincenzo Bellini. As the story goes, Bellini heard Pasta singing from across the lake, and he made haste to find her, a meeting which resulted in his two greatest works, *Norma* and *La Sonnambula*, both leading roles he created for Pasta.

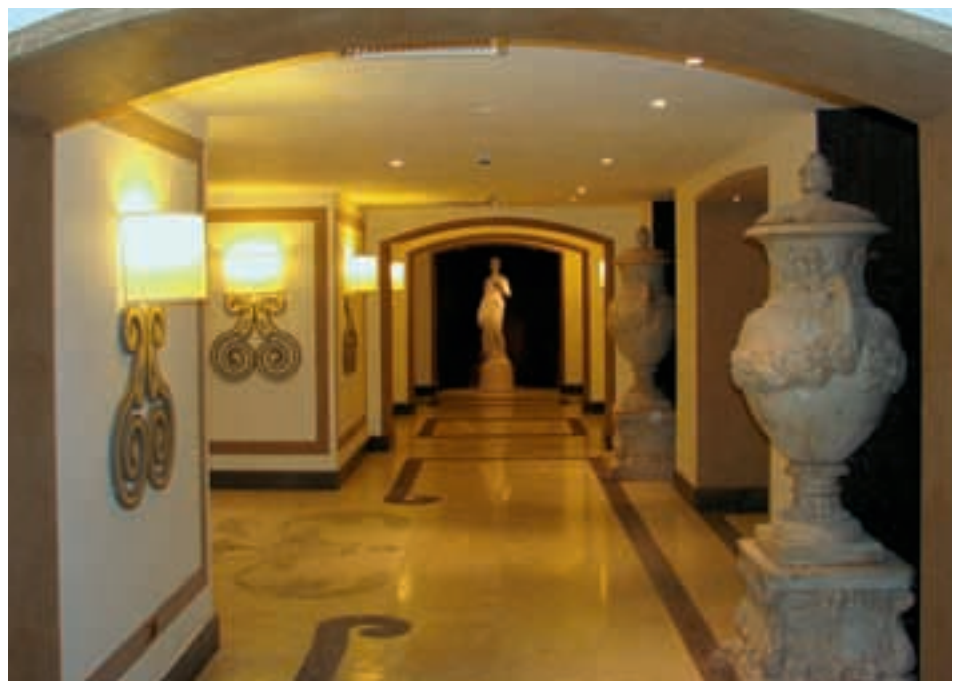
The verdant property of the resort, which meanders up one of the famed lake's rocky slopes toward Strada Provinciale di Blevio, now holds a collection of villas, each named for an opera diva. Villas Norma, Amina, Gilda, Violetta, Leonora, Isotta, Fiordiligi and Dorabella each have distinctive personalities that were created by Erasmo Figini and Susanna Pagani with their team at their Como firm Figini Pagani Progettazioni.

CastaDiva has quickly gained a luxe reputation that has drawn the likes of George Clooney to the resort's Orangerie restaurant, with its expansive terrace overlooking the lake.



Music is a sensual component to the experience at CastaDiva with gentle reminders of Madame Pasta's passion wafting on lake breezes and a waterfront amphitheater where performances take place during the summer months. Melodies infuse every space, including the spa below Villa Roccabruna, which is both state-of-the-art and warmly enveloping. The relaxation room overlooks the Villa's original boat docks, which are nestled into a stately series of ornate stone archways – quintessential in waterside towns like Lake Como and Venice.

Fern-speckled pathways, which wind along the heart of CastaDiva's property, are perfect for burning off the calories consumed during one of chef Paolo Casagrande's magnificent meals. The lushness of the landscape provides a beautiful feeling of intimacy, as does the fact that most of the villas hold only a few suites. Villa Lenora with its vine-covered walls, for instance, has only three, while Villa Violetta – named for the star of Verdi's *La Traviata* – holds six. Though the lovely water views from most of the rooms make CastaDiva an incredibly romantic getaway – the Suite Amina even has a buxom bathtub with panoramic water views – the resort is also a perfect place for families who crave a mix of privacy and an abundance of activities in one place. Just imagine an afternoon spent lounging on the floating



platform containing a pool while the kids splash their way to ecstasy!

It is said that the late US president John Fitzgerald Kennedy, who was buzzing above Lake Como in a helicopter, remarked, "I don't think I've ever seen such a beautiful lake!" We couldn't agree more!

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