

# Preface

When I was a young physics student at the university, the name of the astronomer Giovanni Domenico Cassini evoked a central street in Turin, my town of birth, and a well-known meridian in Bologna. So, I remember some Italian professors assumed that he was from Bologna.

Recently, the name of Cassini is back in the spotlight thanks to the NASA space mission Cassini–Huygens that bears his name, but in the literature, little content has been devoted to his life, only a few articles or some brochures.

Several years after my graduation, some scientific journalists told me about Cassini and his origin, so I discovered a pretty village in Liguria, and I went out to compose an “astrotourism” feature on Perinaldo (never paid, the magazine closed thereafter). There I learned that Cassini was born probably in his family castle, and one of his nephews left this house and joined him in Paris to become his assistant astronomer.

Today, the Perinaldo’s castle is inhabited and not open to the public, but the tourist can visit the Cassini Museum, the “planet” street, and some astronomical garden and a permanent scientific exposition. On some nights, it’s possible to visit the little domed astronomical observatory above the Town Hall.

Here began my idea to write a book about this great astronomer of the past; but despite this, little is known about his life in Italy or elsewhere in the world.

I wish to thank my friend and colleague scientific journalist Giuditta Bricchi for having informed me about the importance of Perinaldo in the life of Cassini. I also thank Marina Muzi for her availability during my visit to Perinaldo and its museum.

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Finally, I wish to express my gratitude to my husband for his constant support and for having provided the maps in this book.

Torino, Italy

Gabriella Bernardi

Giovanni Domenico Cassini

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Bernardi, G.

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