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**SPONSOR** (from Lat. *spondere,* to promise), one who stands surety for another, especially in the rite of Christian baptism, a godfather or godmother. The practice originated not in infant baptism, but in the custom of requiring an adult pagan who offered himself for the rite to be accompanied by a Christian known to the bishop, who could vouch for the applicant and undertake his supervision, thus fulfilling the function performed in the Eleusinian mysteries by the *mystagogus.* The Greek word for the person undertaking this function is *άvάδοχος*, to which the Latin *susceptor* is equivalent. The word “ sponsor ” in this ecclesiastical sense occurs for the first time, but incidentally only, and as if it were already long familiar, in Tertullian’s treatise *De baptismo* (ch. 18), where, arguing that in certain circumstances baptism may conveniently be postponed, especially in the case of little children, he asks, "For why is it necessary that the sponsors likewise should be thrust into danger, who both themselves by reason of mortality may fail to fulfil their promises, and may also be disappointed by the development of an evil disposition [in those for whom they become sponsors] ? ” The sponsors here alluded to may have been in many cases the actual parents, and even in the 5th century it was not felt to be inappropriate that they should be so; Augustine, indeed, in one passage appears to speak of it as a matter of course that parents should bring their children and answer for them “ tanquam fidejussores” *(Episl. . . . ad Bonif.* 98), and the oldest Egyptian ritual bears similar testimony. Elsewhere Augustine contem­plates the bringing of the children of slaves by their masters, and of course orphans and foundlings were brought by other benevolent persons. The comparatively early appearance, however, of such names as *compatres, commatres, propatres, promatres, patrini, matrinae,* is of itself sufficient evidence, not only that the sponsorial relationship had come to be regarded as a very close one, but also that it was not usually assumed by the natural parents. How very close it was held to be is shown by the Justinian prohibition of marriage between godparents and godchildren. On the other hand, the anciently allowable practice of parents becoming sponsors for their own children, though gradually becoming obsolete, seems to have lingered until the 9th century, when it was at last formally prohibited by the council of Mainz (813). For a long time there was no fixed rule as to the necessary or allowable number of sponsors and sometimes the number actually assumed was large. By the council of Trent, however, it was decided that one only, or at most two, these not being of the same sex, should be permitted. The rubric of the Church of England according to which “ there shall be for every male child to be baptized two godfathers and one godmother, and for every female one godfather and two godmothers,” is not older than 1661; the sponsors are charged with the duty of instructing the child, and in due time presenting it for confirmation, and in the Catechism the child is taught to say that he received his name from his “ godfathers and god­mothers.” At the Reformation the Lutheran churches retained godfathers and godmothers, but the Reformed churches reverted to what they believed to be the more primitive rule, that in ordinary circumstances this function should be undertaken by a child’s proper parents. Most churches demand of sponsors that they be in full communion. In the Roman Catholic Church, priests, monks and nuns are disqualified from being sponsors, either “ because it might involve their entanglement in worldly affairs,” or more probably because every relationship of father­hood or motherhood is felt to be in their case inappropriate. The spiritual relationship established between the sponsor and the baptized, and the sponsors and the parents of the baptized, constitutes an impediment to marriage (see Marriage: *Canon Law).*

**SPONTINI, GASPARO LUIGI PACIFICO** (1774-1851), Italian musical composer, was born on the 14th of November 1774 at Majolati (Ancona) in Italy. He was the son of a poor cobbler and was intended for the priesthood. His musical propensities however were not to be restrained, and he obtained lessons from Kapellmeister Quintiliani. In 1791 he went to the Conserva­tors de' Turchini at Naples, where he was trained to write operatic music under Paisiello, Cimarosa and Fiori vanti. His first opera, *L’Eroismo ridicolo,* was successfully produced in 1796, and by 1799 he had already written and produced eight operas. After becoming court composer to King Ferdinand of Naples in this year an intrigue with a princess of the court compelled Spontini to leave Naples in 1800. For the next few years he wrote operas in Rome and Venice until 1803 when he settled in Paris, where his reception was anything but flattering. His comic opera *Julie* proved a failure; a successor, *La Petite maison,* was hissed. Undaunted by these misfortunes, he abandoned the light and somewhat frivolous style of his earlier works, and in *Milton,* a one-act opera produced in 1804, achieved a real success. Spontini henceforth aimed at a very high ideal, and during the remainder of his life strove so earnestly to reach it that he frequently remodelled his passages five or six times before permitting them to be performed in public, and wearied his singers by introducing new improvements at every rehearsal. His first masterpiece was *La Vestale,* completed in 1805, but kept from the stage through the opposition of a jealous clique until the 15th of December 1807, when it was produced at the Académie, and at once took rank with the finest works of its class. Spontini had abandoned the *parlando* of Italian opera for an accompanied recitative; he had increased the strength of the orchestra and introduced the big chorus freely. His opera, *Ferdinand Cortez,* was received with equal enthusiasm in 1809; but another, *Olympia,* was much less warmly welcomed in 1819. Napoleon, whose approval of any work of art was at once a compliment to the artist and a serious imputation on the value of the work, professed immense admiration for Spontini’s music.

Spontini had been appointed director of the Italian opera in 1810; but his quarrelsome and grasping disposition led to his summary dismissal two years later, and, though reinstated in 1814, he voluntarily resigned his post soon afterwards. He was in fact very ill fitted to act as director; yet on the 28th of May 1820, five months after the failure of *Olympia,* he settled in Berlin by invitation of Frederick William III., commissioned to super­intend all music performed at the Prussian court and compose two new grand operas, or three smaller ones, every three years. But he began by at once embroiling himself with the intendant, Count Brühl. Spontini's life at Berlin may be best described as a ceaseless struggle for precedence under circumstances which rendered its attainment impossible. Yet he did good work. *Die Vestalin, Ferdinand Cortez* and *Olympia—*the last two entirely remodelled—were produced with great success in 1821. A new opera, *Nourmahal,* founded on Moore’s *Lalla Rookh,* was performed in 1822, and another, entitled *Alcidor,* in 1825; and in 1826 Spontini began the composition of *Agnes von Hohen­staufen,* a work planned on a grander scale than any of his