

SYMPOSIUM RECORDS CD 1100

THE HAROLD WAYNE COLLECTION - Volume 8

When in 1931 P. G. Hurst first wrote about the "London Reds", they were already fabulous rarities in the collections of a select few, who had bought them when they were first issued. They were not quite the first celebrity records to appear. Probably the Zonofono records of Toresella and Signoretti, and the Gramophone & Typewriter issues of certain Russian singers, including the Figiers and possibly Chaliapin, had preceded them by a few months, but when they appeared as a substantial series in 1902, they gave a respectability to the gramophone previously denied it by many music lovers.

The Gramophone & Typewriter Company claimed that recording had now reached a stage of perfection when great artists were able to record with the confidence of knowing that their voices would be faithfully reproduced. In fact, these early records, primitive as they are, have an immediacy and a sense of presence which are in some ways unique.

No one cared greatly if there were the occasional spoken comments of a Calvé. In fact these asides in some ways brought us into more intimate contact with the artist.

It seems incredible that Harold Wayne has managed to acquire an almost complete collection of these precious discs. They have a unique place in the history of the gramophone and collectors everywhere must feel deeply indebted to him for allowing us to hear them in very good transfers. I remember the excitement when in 1935 I found a copy of Plançon's "Pif, paf, pouf" in the open market in Brighton, and paid sixpence for this gem. I did not dream, even in those early days, that I should ever be able to hear a virtually complete collection.

Pol Plançon was born at Fumay in the Ardennes on the 12th June 1854, and from an early age was determined to be an opera singer. He studied first with the great French tenor Duprez, and later with Sbriglia in Paris.

He made his début in Lyons as St. Bris in *Les Huguenots* in 1877 and stayed there for two years. He arrived in Paris in late 1880 and was first engaged at La Gaité, where he sang in Duprat's *Pétrarque*. He made his début at the Paris Opéra on the 25th June 1883 as Mephistophelès in Gounod's *Faust* and was soon recognized as an artist of quite exceptional talents.

A few years later he commenced his international career, again choosing the role of Mephistofelès for his début at Covent Garden on the 3rd June 1891 and appearing in every season until 1904. His début at the Metropolitan Opera, New York was in Gounod's *Philémon et Baucis* on November 29th 1893 and he appeared there regularly until his retirement in 1908.

Plançon's 1902 recordings were an instant success, for his superb technique and wonderfully smooth legato added to a voice of great natural resonance made him ideally suited to the early recording apparatus. His technical command of coloratura, including a superb trill, (as exemplified in his recording of the "Couplets de Vulcain") made him unique among basses of his day and he has never been remotely approached since. Added to this he possessed an elegance and nobility of style which soon made him generally acclaimed as the greatest basso of his generation. He did not live long after his retirement; he died in Paris in 1914.

Anton van Rooy was born in Rotterdam on the 1st January 1870 and died in Munich on the 28th November 1932. He studied with the famous baritone and teacher Julius Stockhausen who was himself a pupil of Manuel Garcia.

He started as a concert artist and was heard by Cosima Wagner who invited him to sing at Bayreuth, where he made his stage début as Wotan in 1897, creating a profound impression. He made his début at Covent Garden on the 11th May 1898 and sang there regularly until 1913.

He again chose Wotan in *Das Rheingold* for his first appearance at the Metropolitan Opera, New York on the 13th January 1899 and afterwards appeared in every season until 1908.

His voice was one of tremendous power, beauty and authority and he was considered the finest exponent of such roles as Hans Sachs, Wotan and Kurvenal during the first decade of this century. He was prodigal in the outpouring of his huge voice and this no doubt was the reason that by 1908, when he made his last records, he was showing signs of vocal wear. His final appearance at Covent Garden in 1913 showed him in serious decline.

His 1902 recordings give some idea of him in his prime and are precious souvenirs. As P. G. Hurst wrote, "The dignity of his presence and the immense power of his voice, together with the majestic breadth of his interpretations, will long be remembered by those who heard him".

Antonio Scotti was born in Naples on the 20th January 1866. His parents hoped that he would become a priest, but the young man had other ideas. He was determined to become an opera singer, and worked in a commercial institution to obtain the necessary money for having his voice trained.

He studied first with Signora Trifari Paganini and later with Vincenzo Lombardi, and by the time he had reached his 23rd birthday, Lombardi thought him ready to make his début. He first appeared at the Teatro Reale in Malta on the 1st November 1889 in the role of Amonasro. He then served a useful apprenticeship visiting Chile, Argentina, Spain and Russia. He was brought to the attention of Giulio Gatti-Cassaza who offered him an engagement at La Scala, Milan in 1898. He made his début there rather surprisingly as Hans Sachs in *Die Meistersinger* on the 9th February 1899 with sufficient success to obtain an engagement at Covent Garden, where in 1900 he thrilled audiences with his dramatic intensity as Scarpia, a role which he soon made his own. He appeared at Covent Garden regularly until 1914.

In 1899 he sang in Chicago and then made his début at the Metropolitan Opera on the 27th December of that year as Don Giovanni. Thirty four years later on the 29th January 1933 he gave his farewell performance as Chim Fen in *L'Oracolo*.

These early recordings show Scotti as the possessor of a fine voice of somewhat limited range which he used with faultless technique. His smooth legato, his elegant phrasing and his great gifts as an actor enabled him to maintain a leading position in an age of great baritones which included Battistini, Kaschmann, de Luca, Ruffo, Stracciari and Amato. He recorded extensively for Victor until 1914, his last published disc being a duet with Caruso from Don Carlo, recorded in 1912.

Suzanne Adams was born in Cambridge (Massachusetts) on the 28th November 1872 and died in London on the 5th February 1953. She studied in Paris with Bouhy and Mathilde Marchesi, and made her début as Juliette at the Paris Opéra on the 9th January 1895, having studied the roles of Juliette and Marguérite with Gounod. Her success was immediate and she was given a three year engagement at the Opéra. She made her Covent Garden début on the 10th May 1898 as Juliette and was praised by a London critic for her 'beautiful and liquid voice'. She sang at Covent Garden until 1906 when she retired from public life.

She first sang at the Metropolitan Opera on the 4th January 1899 and it was the role of Juliette she chose once more for her début. She sang there until 1903 but the death of her husband Leo Stern caused her to retire for a year in 1904 and she never returned to sing in America.

Blanch Marchesi told the writer of these notes that Mathilde Marchesi warned Adams about making her début when according to Mathilde her general health was suspect, and this led to a coolness between her and her teacher. This may account for the fact that in most biographical notes she only mentions Bouhy as her instructor, although her singing in general is typical of the Marchesi school. Her career was a relatively short one and the American critic Henderson said that at the turn of the century when Melba, Eames, Sembrich and Calvé were all in their primes she occupied a place of secondary importance, but that in the 1920s she would have been a star of the first magnitude. She created the role of Hero in Stanford's *Much Ado about Nothing* at Covent Garden on the 30th May 1901.

Her records certainly show a voice of great beauty and an excellent coloratura technique, but after making some very good records for the American Columbia Company in 1903 she left no further souvenirs of her voice.

Emma Calvé was born on the 15th August 1858 at Decazeville, France. As a child she could always sing, and it was generally accepted in her family that she would become an opera singer. Her mother went with her to Paris, when she was about fifteen (she is rather vague about dates in her biography, *My Life*, translated from the French and published in 1922). She studied first with Puget, making her debut as Marguérite in *Faust* at the Théâtre de la Monnaie in Brussels on the 29th September 1882. She returned to Paris and continued her studies with Mathilde

Marchesi, since Puget her first teacher had died, and she made her Paris début at the Théâtre des Italiens, where she created the role of Bianca in Dubois' *Aben Hamet* on the 16th December 1884. Her first appearance at the Opéra Comique was on the 15th March 1885, after which she sang in provincial Italy gaining experience. She made a disastrous début at La Scala, Milan, where she states in her biography she sang out of tune and was hissed by the audience.

She considered this a salutary lesson, and she returned to Paris and began her studies with Madama Rosine Laborde, who she claimed transformed her and gave her new confidence. From that time her great career started. She made a very successful début at Covent Garden as Santuzza on May 16th 1892, and she chose the same role for her first appearance at the Metropolitan Opera, New York on the 29th November 1893. On both sides of the Atlantic she was hailed as the greatest singing actress of her time.

She retired from the operatic stage in 1907, but continued to sing in concerts for many years. She was considered the greatest Carmen of her generation, and it became her most famous role.

Her voice was unique with a range from A below the stave to E in Alt. and she was very successful in some high soprano roles including Marguérite in *Faust*, Leila in *Les Pecheurs de Perles* and Ophélie in *Hamlet*. The voice was of luscious quality with great purity in the upper range and a full bodied chest register on the lower notes. She was famous for her piano high notes, which she could maintain for a surprising length of time in what she called her fourth voice. The final note of 'Magali' illustrates this quite wonderfully.

Calvé was a highly individual artist and in these 1902 recordings various spoken remarks can be clearly heard. They were probably instructions to her accompanist and they help to give a vivid impression of a unique personality in the operatic world of her day.

Maurice Renaud was born in Bordeaux on the 24th July 1862 and died in Paris on the 16th October 1933. He studied briefly at the Conservatoires in Paris and Brussels making an early début at the Théâtre de la Monnaie in the latter city in 1893, when only twenty-one, and he was immediately given leading roles, creating the part of the High Priest in Reyer's *Sigurd* on the 7th January 1884.

He remained at La Monnaie until 1890, perfecting his art, and then returned to France, making his début at the Opéra Comique on the 10th October 1890 in *Le Roi d'Ys* and following this with a first appearance at the Opéra as Nelusko in *l'Africaine* on the 17th January 1891. He was soon recognised as the legitimate successor of Faure and Lassalle, and also proved himself a fine actor with a commanding stage presence.

Appearances at Covent Garden from 1897 onwards and in America, first at the Manhattan Opera House (1904-1910) and finally at the Metropolitan Opera House (1911-1912) were all highly praised, Henderson remarking of his Don Giovanni: "A handsomer more dashing and captivating singer has not been seen in this part".

The first world war effectively terminated his international career but he

continued to sing at the Paris Opéra until 1919 when he retired.

His voice, as shown on his records was a powerful baritone of lovely quality and extended range and his smooth easy production and perfect legato, together with his superb diction, made him an outstanding example of the French school at its very best.

John Freestone

Dr. Wayne writes:

The London Reds. So much has been detailed about this illustrious set by the specialist collector, the late L. Hevingham-Root, that I propose to draw attention to the relative rarity of only the most difficult items.

PLANÇON 2-2717 'Embarques-Vous' would be the rarest by far. My specimen had been preserved in lovely condition by Malcolm Hurlley who assured me that he had purchased it when it was first issued.

2-2661 'Huguenots' was still listed in the Jan 1914 Celebrity Catalogue, but I have never seen a 'Dog' label of the title. I came upon this, together with 2-2667 G&T 'Carmen' at the home of the erstwhile dealer Arthur Renton at Leamington Spa in 1960, at my very first meeting with him. This and 'Caid' are my personal favourites.

VAN ROOY- As a group I have found these to be the rarest of the whole set, in spite of having owned 2 of 2- 2685 'Walkiire', and surprisingly also 2 of 2-2700 'Das Mühlrad', both of the latter in the select archive of Dr. Dick Alexander.

2-2715 "Tannhauser" was acquired at the same time as the two Plançons from Renton. These lasted but a short time in the catalogue, were replaced by duplications of titles on Columbia 1906/7 and also by pink pre-dogs in 1908.

Scotti - it is easy to visualise why 1902 Scotti's are very rare, when one notes that the Victor Company recorded this scholarly voice from 1903 onwards, thus duplicating several of the earlier titles, so that these were also made available in England from that time, virtually to the exclusion of the earlier.

In particular I would single out the Rotoli "Serenata" as one of the rarest records in existence. I am again indebted to Captain Hartley for my cherished specimen, and know of only two others extant. Following 2-2708 in order of rarity comes "Messaline" and the "Invano". Probably only "Carmen" might be unearthed, if any.

ADAMS - 3295 'Printemps Nouveau' I rate to be the rarest with 3295 Coquette a close second. The former came from the 'de Bry' collection, but is a London Label. Coquette shows evidence of having had a black label superimposed at one time. This and 'Home Sweet Home' were provided by Colin Shreve. 'Romeo et Juliette' from Guy Dumazert of Paris.

CALVÉ - 3282 'Magali' takes first prize for rarity, all copies being heavily dimpled at the crucial entry of her '4th voice' in the delicious codetta of this charming piece. I was lucky enough to find a perfect pressing in the de Bry collection together with 'Enchantment', but this is not so rare, having been issued

a year or so later on Victor's imported 'Monarch' label. I once had such a example from Mastrangelo Prospect, 3284 'Zanetto' is very rare too. I was fortunate to count this among the holding of 1902 London Reds on the possession of Arthur Renton.

RENAUD - this artist is singular among this series in that the Gramophone Company had already recorded no less than 9 titles by him in Paris in 1901. Fortunately, apart from Tannhauser, no duplication occurred.

I was extremely lucky with these. One day in the late '50s I chanced to look into "Collector's Corner" in Monmouth Street and arrived to find Ronald Phillips in a rather heated exchange of words with a very slim youth, who was obviously asking too much for these few records on the counter. After a few seconds Ronald said abruptly, "Give them to Wayne. He'll buy anything, so long as it's before World War I." In this manner, I added 2-2702, 2-2703, 2-2704 and 2-2713 to my collection in one fell swoop. A very lucky day for me. 2-2704 has clearly had a black label removed, whilst 2-2713 may have been so from its original state. 2-2705 "Carmen" I found in a beautiful copy in a junk-pile in a back street of Naples!

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