

# *SYMPOSIUM RECORDS CD 1101*

## THE HAROLD WAYNE COLLECTION – Volume 9

Dr. Harold Wayne began collecting vocal records in the 1960s, when many considered that it was already too late to assemble a substantial and representative selection of what P.G. Hurst has termed 'the pinnacles of the collector's ambition'. The Wayne collection is the result of an enthusiasm which developed into determination and - as he himself puts it - ultimately into an obsession with records. By correspondence and by telephone, personally and by proxy, by means systematic or serendipitous, but always relentlessly, he scoured Europe, the Americas, and the Antipodes. It is a collection which, for its scope, its completeness, its state of preservation, and for the importance of some of the singers of whom it holds specimens which are thought to be unique, is probably unparalleled.

Symposium Records now presents, from the Wayne collection, a group of important records by Felia Litvinne and Victor Maurel.

This series features early recording artists whose careers were of major importance. Though most of the records included are very rare, scarcity is not of itself a criterion for inclusion: there are records of great musical, musicological or historical value, such as those of Fabbri or Kaschmann, or those of artists, important in their time, whom collectors may wish to hear and which they should have the opportunity of hearing, such as Garulli or Toresella. The series does not include records - notable only for their rarity - by undistinguished artists of minor importance.

The records have been chosen both for their musical and historical value, and for the fact that their rarity makes them inaccessible, in original form, to the majority of collectors. Most have been unavailable for a hundred years or more. Great care has been taken to transfer them as vividly as possible even though this has inevitably required retention of more mechanical noise than one would wish. Similar care has been exercised in determining the speeds at which to transfer them, the more so since few Compact Disc players offer variable pitch facilities.

**Victor Maurel** (Marseille, June 17 1848-New York, Oct.22 1923) is today remembered, above all, for having created the part of Iago in Verdi's *Otello* and the title role of the same composer's *Falstaff*. His career and reputation were created not solely, or even principally, through natural or cultivated vocal distinction, but through unusually well-developed mental powers: '... the intellectuality of Victor Maurel', wrote Herman Klein, dealing clinically and acidly with Shaw's *Music in London, 1890-94* and the 'irresponsible free-lancedom that pervades every line' of those writings, 'was always his most prominent attribute, both as actor and singer.' Among his other accomplishments Maurel numbered painting (perhaps a legacy of his alleged early training as an architect); he designed the sets for the Metropolitan Opera première of *Mireille*, in February 1919. He was an enthusiastic and accomplished swordsman - a worthwhile accomplishment for so renowned a Don Giovanni - and was said to have included surgery among his hobbies. His published writings include *Dix ans de carrière* (Paris, 1897), which was translated into German by Lilli Lehmann, no less, and substantial other works on vocal science and on the production of *Otello* and *Don Giovanni*. In his time he was thought of as a dramatic genius, at his best where his 'restless cerebration' had maximum scope.

His early career, however, was more traditional, and his repertoire is hardly to be distinguished from that of many another baritone who lacked an exceptional natural voice (although discussions of the voice must recognise that he was already in his fifties when he made his first records). The bass André De Segurola described the voice as 'not big in the dimensional sense of the word [but it] had the most beautiful quality, also the marvellous control he had over his vocal organ, I think, was the most perfect of any contemporary.' Emma Calvé wrote: 'I have never seen anyone with a more noble presence, a greater dignity and carriage on the stage. His dramatic gift was so extraordinary that it dominated the minds of those who saw him, and almost made them forget his voice, which was, nevertheless, of an unusual quality, full of colour and exceptionally expressive.' Maurel was educated at the Conservatoires of Marseille and Paris, where he was a pupil of Vauthrot and Duvernoy. His début was at the Grand Opéra of Paris, as Di Luna (*Il Trovatore*) and as Nevers (*Les Huguenots*) in 1868. Subsequently he made guest appearances at St. Petersburg, Cairo and Venice. In 1870 came the first of two world premières, both at La Scala, Milan, of operas by the Brazilian Carlos Gomes: on March 19th 1870 Maurel appeared there in *Il Guarany*; three years later, on February 16th (February 17th, according to Clement & Larousse) 1873, he sang in the world première of *Fosca*. He had great success at Covent Garden in 1873-9, 1886, 1890-2, 1895, 1904 (Autumn season), and 1905, and to list only the operas which he sang in London is to note how his recorded legacy belies his repertoire: they were *L'Africaine*, *Aida*, *Un Ballo in Maschera*, *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*, *Dinorah*, *Don Giovanni*, *Don Pasquale*, *L'Elisir d'Amore*, *Ermani*, *L'Etoile du Nord*, *Faust*, *Falstaff*, *Der Fliegende Holländer*, *Il Guarany*, *Guillaume Tell*, *Les Huguenots*, *Linda di Chamounix*, *Lohengrin*, *Le Nozze di Figaro*, *Otello*, *Paul et Virginie*, *Rigoletto*, *Semiramide*, *Tannhäuser*, *La Traviata*, *Il Trovatore* and *Die Zauberflöte*. In 1889 Maurel gave *Otello* at the Lyceum Theatre, London, with Tamagno; his Iago was heard at Covent Garden in 1891, to the *Otello* of Jean de

Reszke, and again in 1895, when Tamagno, making his Covent Garden début, assumed the title role. Maurel's London operatic career closed in 1905, with a Covent Garden Malatesta, 'acted and sung in his own airy fashion'. Elsewhere his operas included *Carmen*, *La Favorita*, *Hamlet*, *Hérodiade*, *Manon*, and the revised version of *Simon Boccanegra* which, with Tamagno and Edouard de Reszke, he created at La Scala in 1881.

The part of David in the world première of Mascagni's *L'Amico Fritz*, eventually sung by Paul Lherie, was initially assigned to Maurel. In that of *Pagliacci* (Milan, T. Dal Verme, May 21, 1892) it was Maurel who sang Tonio, and it was for him that Leoncavallo added, as an afterthought, the famous 'Prologue' to satisfy the baritone that the part was important enough for an artist of his distinction. (The Prologue proved, it must be said, to be one of the most striking features of the opera.) In 1900 Maurel created *Le Juif Polonais* (Erlanger) at the Paris Opéra-Comique.

Maurel was a famed interpreter of Verdi. It was said to have been the composer himself who chose him for the first Neapolitan performance of *Don Carlos*, at the San Carlo, March 6th 1871, and Maurel's association with *Simon Boccanegra* has already been noted. But it is for his creations of Iago (La Scala, February 5th 1887, with Pantaleoni and Tamagno) and Falstaff (La Scala, February 9th 1893, with Stehle, Guerrini, Garbin and Antonio Pini-Corsi) that his niche in operatic history is secure. Shaw, who heard Maurel and Tamagno at the London première of *Otello* (Lyceum, July 5th 1889) described the baritone's voice as 'woolly and tremulous', and his acting 'quite as good as a good provincial tragedian, mouthing and ranting a little, but often producing striking pictorial effects'. However, Henderson (the eminent critic for the *New York Times* and, after 1902, for the *New York Sun*) thought that the triumph of the evening belonged not to Tamagno's pealing high notes but to Cassio's Dream, 'one of the most consummate pieces of vocal finesse this writer has ever heard.' It was a triumph achieved by pure vocal art, by the 'subtlety of his inflections, the shimmering variety of vocal colour, and the far-reaching eloquence of his interpretation.' As Iago, Maurel was described as 'the greatest of singing actors', who made all others seem 'small and limp of purpose'. Iago and Otello were parts in which Maurel and Tamagno appeared together on many notable occasions, including a new production at the Metropolitan Opera, New York, on December 3rd 1894, and they were parts for which they could then name their own terms: the financial failure of the Buenos Aires season of 1890 is partly attributable to the fact that their fees alone accounted for four fifths of the receipts on some nights.

Maurel's Falstaff was a creation which drew virtually unanimous praise: 'an astounding piece of theatrical virtuosity performed with perfect poise' was how Henderson described it. His verdict after the New York premiere was: 'It is a superb, consistent and thoroughly artistic piece of work.' Again, we have only a single glimpse of how he treated the part: the swagger of his portrayal is well displayed in his Fonotipia recording (to feature in a future issue in this series), where he sings 'Quand'ero paggio' three times, to frantic studio applause.

For more than three decades Maurel travelled the operatic circuit - Buenos

Aires, Lisbon, London, Madrid, Moscow, Naples, New York, Paris, St. Petersburg - and to him fell the honour of performing in many national premières of works such as *Aida*, *Boccanegra*, *Hérodiade* and, of course, *Otello* and *Falstaff*. He was a supremely self-confident, not to say egotistical man: Henderson wrote of his 'remarkably powerful superiority complex. His ego swam out of him at every performance. Without doubt he was a little vain, a little pompous and not a little self-glorified.' It took the sight and sound of Sir Augustus Harris as, in the full panoply of his office of Sheriff of London, he sat on high, dispensing justice in the Central Criminal Court, to intimidate Maurel at his most disputatious. In mid-career, Maurel turned his attention, apparently with success, to lecturing. Shaw noted that: 'The role of lecturer was never better acted since lecturing began.' Operatic actors, insisted Maurel, should study the psychology of their parts, and the designers of stage costume and scenery should aim at producing an appropriate illusion as to the place and period assigned by the dramatist to the action of the piece. It is interesting to note that this implied reviling of what we had supposed to be a modern phenomenon, namely the visual outrages of operatic producers, dates from 1890 not 1990.

After the close of his operatic career Maurel took to the legitimate stage, and then to teaching. The young Thomas Beecham was evidently much influenced by the larger-than-life baritone, who had settled in London and set up a private school of singing for advanced operatic students. Beecham once conducted a performance of Grétry's *Le Tableau Parlant* at a private house in London, with Maurel, one of the baritone's pupils and some French singers from Paris. In 1909 Maurel emigrated to the United States, where he remained until his death.

All Maurel's records are rare in original form, but the Gramophone & Typewriters are much scarcer than the Fonotipias. Several G&Ts in the Wayne collection carry black labels over the original red labels; this practice (observable also in the records of some other early G&T artists) dates from the period at which Maurel's records were transferred to the less-prestigious black label section, presumably when he began to record for Fonotipia in 1904. Performance reviews make it clear that his art drew as much on acting as on singing, and we should not, perhaps, rely on these primitive recordings to convey to us much, if any, of the impression that he made in the theatre. Though we should be grateful for the creator's two recordings of 'Iago's Dream' it is regrettable that he did not give us more of the part. Verdi might not, perhaps, have approved of his liberties with the music but beyond question is his vocal control in the insinuating phrases of the sleeping Cassio. Lighter stuff is found in the songs: his treatment of 'Chanson de printemps', where he resorts to aspirates, has perhaps too much of 'Monsieur Maurel de l'Opera', but quite irresistible is 'Marquise'. The head notes in 'L'Heure Exquise' are an acquired taste.

The interested reader will find in Bernard Shaw's *Music in London, 1890-94*, London, Constable and Company, 1932, many reviews, some of them decidedly amusing, of Maurel's performances. A more comprehensive - and objective - review of Maurel's career is: Desmond Shawe-Taylor, 'A Gallery of Great Singers', *Opera*, May 1955, pp. 293-297.

**Félia Litvinne** (St. Petersburg Oct. 11th 1863 - Paris, October 12th 1936) was born Françoise-Jeanne Schütz, youngest daughter of a Russian father and a Canadian mother, in St. Petersburg on October 11th 1863 (some sources give 1860 or 1861; 1863 is the year given in the singer's autobiography, *Ma vie et mon art*, Paris, 1933). Her sisters, Céline (who later married Edouard de Reszke) and Hélène who were, respectively, twelve and three years her senior, both studied singing, and her brother Willy became a conductor and impresario. Educated in Russia, Italy and Switzerland, Félia was brought up in a household where languages were cultivated, in addition to French (the usual language of the Russian upper classes) and Russian, she learned English, German and Italian.

In 1870 Félia's mother took the family to Milan, where Céline became a pupil of Lamperti. After their mother died in Italy Céline took the family to Paris, where Félia studied for three years with Mme. Barthe-Banderali, and had several lessons from Pauline Viardot-Garcia.

Litvinne sang recitals in Paris before making an unofficial début at the Théâtre des Italiens there (under the direction of Victor Maurel; some sources describe her as his pupil, but this seems unlikely to have been a formal or continuing arrangement) as a replacement for Fidès Devriès in *Simon Boccanegra* in December 1883. Her official début occurred on May 8th 1884, when she sang (under the name Litvinova) at the same theatre in *Ernani*, with Leopoldo Signoretta and Augusto Brogi. In the following two years she sang at Aix-les-Bains, Bordeaux, and Barcelona in *Un Ballo in Maschera*, *Don Giovanni*, *Faust*, *Hérodiade* (Salomé), *Les Huguenots* (Valentine), *Lucrezia Borgia*, *Rigoletto*, and *Ruy Blas*. Her first North American tour was made, as 'Litvinoff, of the Paris Opéra', in 1885 as a member of the Mapleson Opera Company, when she sang in *Don Giovanni* and *Il Trovatore*. (In fact, her début at the Paris Opéra, as Valentine in *Les Huguenots*, to the Raoul of Leon Escalaïs, did not take place until March 1889.) In 1886-88 and 1889-90 she sang at the Monnaie in *L'Africaine*, *La Gioconda*, *Hamlet*, *Hérodiade*, *Les Huguenots*, *Sigurd*, and *Il Trovatore*. She also sang there in the first French language performance of *Die Walküre*, her first contact with the Wagnerian repertory with which she would later be closely identified. In 1890 she was at La Scala (*Hamlet*, with Calvé (Ophélie), and Battistini). She sang often in Russia in works such as *Rusalka* (Dargomizhsky) and *Judith* (Serov).

After her marriage to Dr. Emmanuel de Poix in 1893 Litvinne retired from the stage. The retirement was, however, temporary, for in 1895 the couple separated and the soprano returned to the operatic stage in Marseille. That same year she again appeared at La Scala, first in the Italian première of *Henri VIII* (Saint-Saëns) and, early in 1896, in *Samson et Dalila*, with Garulli and Giuseppe Pacini. In her only Metropolitan season, 1896-7, she added *Aida*, *Le Cid*, *Faust*, *Lohengrin*, *Siegfried* (Brünnhilde), and *Tristan und Isolde* to her repertoire. Covent Garden heard her in 1899 (début opera *Tristan und Isolde*, with Schumann-Heink, Jean de Reszke, and van Rooy), *Aida*, *Les Huguenots*, and *Die Walküre*; in 1902 she sang her first London Donna Anna (*Don Giovanni*) and in 1905 her first Ring there. In 1903 she had returned to the Monnaie for that theatre's first complete

Ring; in 1911 she performed in the corresponding event at the Paris Opera. She returned to Covent Garden in 1907, first for the German season of January and February, when the tenor Ernest van Dyck was general manager, and then in Rendle's Autumn season (*Aida*, *Don Giovanni*, and *La Gioconda*). Her 1910 appearances there seem to have been limited to *Die Götterdämmerung*. The many parts she assumed at Monte Carlo from 1896 included the title roles in *Hélène* (Saint-Saëns) in 1905, and the same composer's *L'Ancêtre* at its world première (February 24th 1906). In her autobiography Litvinne helpfully lists the 41 operas, many of them now forgotten, which she had performed on stage; many of them she knew in three of the four languages (French, German, Italian and Russian) in which she regularly sang. She learned a further 26 which she performed, if at all, only in concerts.

Litvinne made only occasional operatic appearances after 1916, the year of her last creation, *Judith de Béthule* (Armande de Polignac) at the Opéra. In 1927 she took a post at the American Conservatoire at Fontainebleau; two of her pupils were Nina Koshetz and Germaine Lubin.

Early in the century Litvinne made cylinders for Pathé in St. Petersburg, before recording for the Gramophone & Typewriter Company in Paris in 1903. She went on to record more Pathé cylinders (1903-4), Fonotipias (1905), and Odéon De Luxe (1907), all in Paris.

Like Maurel's, Litvinne's G&Ts are found both with red and with black labels. Bauer's *Historical Records* states that they were transferred from the red to the black label section on January 1st 1905. Although not all the pressings are so identified it is accepted that the first eight 25 cm recordings (six of which are presented here) were accompanied by Alfred Cortot. A second series comprised, in addition to two 30 cm records, re-recordings of all eight of the first series, presumably because of the poor quality of the sound in the first series; the re-recordings are identified by the 'X' suffix to the serial number as engraved on the stamper. This suffix does not appear on the label of any copy of the six re-recordings examined by the writer. However, Witten (*The Record Collector*, 1972, pp.147-156), developing a facet touched upon by Hurst (*The Golden Age Recorded*, 1963, p.73), suggests that an extant photograph (which Barnes and Girard, in their biography of Litvinne in *The Record Collector*, Vol. VIII, p.131, conclude dates from 1903) of the soprano in the G&T studios with a female accompanist indicates that she may have re-recorded these titles with an accompanist other than Cortot. Had Cortot played for this session the company would, surely, have been swift to advertise the fact and so recoup the substantial fee that he would have been paid. We cannot, then, assume that Cortot accompanied the second group. The fact that most second-series labels (which are apparently identical to those of the first series, even though mounted on different recordings) carry his name may indicate nothing more than a wish to use up existing stocks of labels and a fine disregard both for artistic truth and historical precision.

'Flame-like' was often used to describe the character of her brilliant and impassioned singing: glimpses of this and of the size and quality of her voice are detectable in her G&T records and, still more so, in those for Fonotipia and Odéon.

Of the G&Ts it is perhaps the arias from *Samson et Dalila* (33160X) and *Sapho* which best display the radiance of her timbre, the warmth of her chest notes and the blending of her registers. A sidelight on her distinguished performance of 'Pleurez mes yeux', Chimène's aria in *Le Cid*, is that the de Reszkes (Litvinne's inlaws) and Fidès-Devriès, whose indisposition had led to her operatic début, had created principal roles at the world première of the work at the Opéra in 1885.

Michael Henstock April 1991

*Dr. Wayne writes:*

Since the G&Ts of Maurel and Litvinne carried, at one time or another, red labels, black labels, and red labels stuck over black, I believe that it is of interest to include these details as they apply to my own pressings.

Maurel: I have found two lovely copies of 2-32815; though the matrix details are identical one pressing is a flush black over a red label, with a very wide raised rim of shellac surrounding them, a peculiarity that I have never seen elsewhere. The other is a second stamper pressing, with a black raised label. 2-32809: This red raised label pressing, the last title to complete my set, came to me from Ronald Phillips, of Collectors' Corner. 2-32810: Of the two examples of this title to pass through my hands one came from Paris and the other from Dick Alexander. 2-32811: This specimen of 'L'Heure Exquise' has a raised black label, over red; it came from Dick Alexander almost thirty years ago, as also did 2-32812, 'Rondel de l'adieu', and 2-32813, 'Fedia'. The present transfer is from a copy bearing a black raised label over red, but Bauer's copy, which came to me, was of the original red label form. Also from Bauer was my red raised label copy of 2-32814 Otello, which replaced a copy acquired from the collection of Mastrangelo, in New York.

Litvinne: Taking into consideration Litvinne's two separate efforts to record her voice for the Gramophone & Typewriter Company the rarity of her discs is extraordinary. However, most of them play very badly indeed, no matter what the stylus size, and this may well account for their unpopularity at the time.

Most of the major collections in Europe and the USA included but one or two examples of Litvinne when, in the 1960s, I started to search for the records of this famed soprano. The only titles which I found in the Paris Flea Market were the 2nd edition of the *Samson et Dalila* aria (33160X) though, occasionally, *Le Cid* (33158X) had been found. However, when in 1968 M. de Bry, the famed Parisian collector, whose admission that his claim to possess the Fonotipias of Jean de Reszke was false featured in a record collecting cause célèbre some 40 years ago, parted with his collection, I was the recipient of 33159, 33160, 33161, 33163 and 33182, all with red raised label (33159 shows signs of having had a black label removed) and 33159X, 33160X, 33162X, 33163X and 33182X, all with flush black labels. Dick Alexander supplied me with 33162 (red raised) and 33182X (red flush, ringed). From James Dennis, who with Ronald Phillips founded *The Record Collector* in the late 1940s, came 33158X (flush red, ringed). Never to have found the Rubinstein song, 'La nuit', (23196) was an hiatus in my collecting life. Other than this, by far the rarest Litvinne titles are, in my experience, 33159 and 33161.

Acknowledgments: Symposium Records gratefully acknowledges the assistance of Dr. Paul Lewis in the production of this album.

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We believe that this series will come to be regarded by collectors, historians, and musicologists as the major means of access to a number of the most important of the earliest generation of recorded artists whose voices have survived only in recordings of surpassing rarity, and which are presented in this collection in the finest known specimens.