

## SYMPOSIUM RECORDS CD 1152

### John O'Sullivan

The O'Sullivan family is one of Ireland's largest families, the most numerous in the province of Munster. It was into a distinguished branch of this great Gaelic sept that one of Erin's most remarkable sons, John O'Sullivan, was born in Cork on October 29, 1877 the offspring of John J. and Frances Ann O'Sullivan (née Coffee). Both his father and grandfather were physicians who practiced in Killarney. His maternal grandfather owned the Lake Hotel, nestled on the lake shore a mile or so from the town of Killarney. Originally a mansion built early in the nineteenth century, the hotel, a local landmark, commands a striking view of the surrounding lakes and mountains and is still a popular holiday retreat for thousands of visitors from around the world.

Life for Dr. O'Sullivan's infant son in these comfortable surroundings held much promise, but tragedy soon entered the world of the future tenor when his father died of tuberculosis at the untimely age of thirty-two. A year or two later, Frances O'Sullivan took her eight year old son and his sister Ann to Forges-les-Eaux in Normandy where the family settled down with an elderly aunt, remaining there until her death, after which Frances and her children moved to nearby Rouen. Here the widow's son sang in the Cathedral Choir, served as an altar boy, and soon acquired an abiding love for the music of Palestrina. The family's financial situation was often difficult, but in time, a fine baritone voice developed and in 1900 the aspiring singer was able to enter the Paris Conservatoire where he studied with Masson and where he met his future wife Marguerite Dequin, a piano student.

O'Sullivan left the Conservatoire in 1902 without graduating and embarked upon a career as a baritone. His early engagements reportedly included a run in Lehar's *Merry Widow*, but as he approached thirty his voice moved conclusively into the tenor range and early in 1908 O'Sullivan journeyed to London, where, masquerading as a Frenchman, he gained an audition at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden venturing Raoul's main aria from *Les Huguenots*. However, he stormed out when unguarded comments were made in English by someone at the audition who little imagined that the young Frenchman really spoke English quite fluently. Undaunted the tenor returned to London in the summer and on August 21, 1908 made his *début* under the name Louis Laurier, in the title role of Wagner's *Tannhäuser* at the Lyric Theatre with the Moody-Manners Opera Company. A tour of the British Isles followed, taking him to Birmingham, Halifax, Liverpool and other centers in performances of *Tannhäuser* and Gounod's *Faust*. He then returned to the Continent and appeared under his real name in Geneva, Toulouse and Lyon. He soon developed a repertory of more than twenty roles, which included Sigurd in Reyer's opera, Roméo, Gauthier in *La Burgonde* by Vidal, Werther, Samson and Arnold in Rossini's *Guillaume Tell*. Now well established, in the summer of 1914 O'Sullivan was summoned to the Paris Opera by Jacques Rouché, who had heard him sing in Lyon, and there made a successful debut in *Les Huguenots*. War soon

intervened and in September the tenor responded to the call to arms and enlisted in the Medical Corps of the British Army. Five months later he made his Monte Carlo debut in uniform in concert on January 26, 1915 singing excerpts from *Carmen*. His military career was however, destined to be extremely short lived, and on March 1, O'Sullivan forsook the army and made his Marseille debut in Bizet's *Carmen*, beginning a long association with a city in which he would enjoy many triumphs. During the remaining war years his career seems to have been confined to France with appearances in Rouen and Paris, where O'Sullivan was heard by the great conductor Cleofonte Campanini and engaged for the Chicago Opera. Taking ship for the United States, following a much applauded engagement at Rouen's Théâtre des Arts, the tenor made his American début in concert on November 8, 1918 at New York's Biltmore Hotel in the most celebrated of company: Galli-Curci and Alda, Caruso and Martinelli. Less than three weeks later O'Sullivan entered the French wing of Campanini's Chicago forces making his début on Thanksgiving Eve, November 21, as Arnold in a production of Rossini's *Guillaume Tell*, which Campanini presented especially for him, and enjoying a tremendous reception.

"His voice at a first hearing is of the clarion quality which sounds the call to arms with brilliant power. Those not of the trade hardly realize the tremendous feats he is accomplishing. Few tenors can even attempt to sing the score in the original key. He was complete master of himself and tossed off phrase after phrase of vocal skyrockets as if they are nothing at all."

Karleton Hacket, *Chicago Evening News*

"Mr. O'Sullivan disclosed operatic qualities of paramount calibre. He has a good personality, is intelligent in the handling of dramatic situations, and his voice can be rated as of brilliant quality of carrying power, high in range. He managed the high and difficult music with adroitness and was accorded a flattering reception."

Maurice Rosenfield, *Chicago Daily News*

A few days later O'Sullivan enjoyed another emphatic success in *Samson et Dalila*, after which he was heard in *Roméo et Juliette*, *Monna Vanna* (with Mary Garden), *I Pagliacci* (his only Italian rôle, sung in French), *Werther* and *Faust*. The company then entrained for a season at the Lexington Theatre in New York, later visiting Philadelphia, Pittsburg and Detroit. His American season at an end, the tenor spent the Spring concertizing in New England before resuming his post in Paris where his rôles included Roméo opposite Maria Kousnezoff. In the Autumn of 1919 O'Sullivan returned to the United States concertizing in Boston and New York. He appeared in *Werther*, *Hérodias*, *Monna Vanna*, *Carmen*, *Louise* and *Thaïs* in Chicago, New York and Boston with his Chicago colleagues, which brought his extremely successful two year Chicago career to an end. A third season was mooted, but the constraints of prohibition did not appeal and he chose not to return. After appearances in Montreal and Toronto in the spring of 1920 with a company made up of artists from Chicago and the Met, he turned his back on North America and sailed for France. He made his re-entry at the Paris Op4ra on July 22

in Monna Vanna and soon added Berlioz's *La Damnation de Faust* to his repertory in Paris. In late November O'Sullivan began a long engagement at the Opéra in Nice where he remained until the spring. His appearance in Wagner's *Tannhäuser*, enjoyed a warm reception.

He had returned to the Paris Opéra when a letter bearing a Nice postmark (and still preserved in the family archive) arrived at his home in the Rue de Clichy.

"Nice, 14th August, 1921

Dear Monsieur Sullivan,

I would like to express all my admiration for the way you sang and acted the role of Tannhäuser. The scene and the narration of the last act confirm my conviction that many great successes await you in Siegfried, Tristan and Parsifal. You have what it takes to interpret those heroes of the Wagnerian dramas: voice, power, verve, acting ability. I must also compliment you on your clear diction and perfect intonation.

Bravo again and yours faithfully,  
Jean de Reszke"

In January 1922 O'Sullivan made a successful début at Lisbon's Teatro São Carlos in *Les Huguenots* with Elsa Bland, Cesare Formichi and the bass, Giulio Cirino. Then aged forty-four, this could be said to mark the outset of his true international career. After further appearances in *Faust* and *Aïda* he returned to the Paris Opéra for a long season and in September made his Italian début at the Teatro Lirico, Milan in *Les Huguenots* with the Spanish dramatic soprano Maria Llacer, under the baton of Leopoldo Mugnone. A month later, though unwell, he made a second Milan début, this time at the city's Teatro dal Verme, in *Il Trovatore* with Tina Poli-Randaccio and Benvenuto Franci. O'Sullivan shared the rôle of Manrico with Ismaele Voltolini and the Basque dramatic tenor Jesús de Gaviria. Blessed with amazing stamina, he then embarked upon a series of performances of *Les Huguenots* and *Guillaume Tell* which took him all over Italy and saw successful appearances in Bologna, Parma, Naples and finally Rome, where he sang at the Teatro Costanzi.

His career in South America began in June 1923 with his début at the Teatro Colón in Buenos Aires in *Guillaume Tell* with Hina Spani and Carlo Galeffi. After this he was seen in the opera houses of Rosario, Montevideo and Rio de Janeiro where he appeared in Braba's opera *Jupyra* and other works. He completed his first South American season in São Paulo where he sang in *Guillaume Tell*, *Faust*, *La Damnation de Faust*, *Louise* and *Il Trovatore* with Claudia Muzio.

Returning to Europe O'Sullivan was engaged for *La Damnation de Faust* in Amiens and with the new year he again began a long tour which took him to Parma, Lisbon, Monte Carlo, Oporto, Florence, Bergamo, Ferrara, Trieste, Genoa and other cities. He made his Spanish début at Madrid's celebrated Teatro Reäl on December 16, 1924 in *Les Huguenots* and a few days later repeated his successes in Barcelona where he enjoyed an overwhelming reception. In 1925 O'Sullivan sang in Egypt and South America, and in the winter returned to Spain, appearing in *Les*

*Huguenots*, *Guillaume Tell*, *Aïda* and in a new role for which his voice was ideally suited, Verdi's *Otello*, at the Teatro del Liceo in Madrid, earning himself flattering reviews, as he did in *Les Huguenots*:

"*Les Huguenots* We intend to feature a more detailed review of this latest performance in another edition. For the present, however, we should put on record that this famous singer, warmly applauded at his first entrance, won a tremendous ovation for the "Racconto" in which he made great show of a splendid high D, and was subsequently similarly applauded in the Septet (Settimino) and in the final big duet which he sustained with expansiveness of phrasing and a ringing voice . . .

We have already referred to the resounding success achieved by the tenor Sullivan, today's Number One Raoul, who has had handed down to him the living tradition of this most arduous of roles from illustrious predecessors, and has won himself the great esteem of his audience. The distinction with which Mr. Sullivan portrayed his character allied to the exceptional quality of his voice, which in its high register has a very beautiful and powerful intensity, combined to assure the ovations earned by the "Racconto" (encored at the clamorous insistence of the public), the Septet and the big final duo, the "andante amoroso" section of which he delivered with great breadth of phrasing . . . . "

*El Correo Catalán*

"*Otello* . . . The Act One closing love duet is a most beautiful and inspired piece of writing, and last evening we heard it sung with exquisite ease by Hida Spani and Sullivan

Sullivan overlaid his delivery of "Ora e per sempre addio" with a finely dramatic intensity, similar to that which was evident in Act 3, in which not only his singing, but also his acting were outstanding. When the fourth act came, Sullivan continued to portray his character with genuine power of emotion, investing his last scene with the requisite pathos . . . "

*Diario de Barcelona*

Returning to Italy, on July 28, 1926, O'Sullivan made his only appearances at the arena in Verona, in *Il Trovatore*, where he again enjoyed extraordinary success:

"All of the public's attention was turned to the protagonist John Sullivan who was a superb Manrico.

Preceded by the fame of a great tenor, he was awaited at the beginning of the pira, a test which was overcome brilliantly. His voice, of a sincere tenor timbre, has clear high notes, ample and ringing, and the recitatives and lyrical passages were sung by Sullivan and executed with perfect art and fervid sentiment.

It is rarely granted us to hear the romance Ah si ben mio that precedes the famous pira, so well sung. Sullivan phrased it deliciously while afterwards in the pira he touched the highest registers with such power and intense dramatic heat that he drew delirious applause from the crowd who insisted upon and obtained an encore.

Sullivan was not only an exceptionally fine singer, but also a magnificent actor with slancio and passion."

*L'Adige*

After his triumphs in Verona the singer returned to Bologna, before completing engagements in Malta, Trieste, Barcelona and Ancona.

Early in 1927 the press in France and Britain began to announce O'Sullivan's Covent Garden début in the Spring, reporting that he had been engaged for *Aïda*, *Otello* (with Lotte Lehmann), *Il Trovatore*, a revival of *Les Huguenots* and the British première of Puccini's *Turandot* with Maria Jeritza, who had sung the role at the opera's first New York performance at the Metropolitan Opera.

O'Sullivan made his Covent Garden debut on May 30 as Raoul in *Les Huguenots*, a work which had not been heard in London for some years. Their Majesties the King George V and Queen Mary were in the royal box with Princess Mary and Viscount Lascelles, and a glittering audience was on hand. Unfortunately, the event was fated to be something of a disaster and the performance was much criticised, though contrary, to the impression given in Rosenthal's Covent Garden history, O'Sullivan generally received good reviews. The English press with their peculiar aversion to vibrato criticised virtually the whole cast save the bass Kipnis. O'Sullivan started nervously, but as the evening progressed he was singing magnificently, and the power and ring of his high notes, taken from the chest, evoked enthusiastic applause and for most reviewers his début was a decided success.

There was, however, considerable bad blood backstage between the tenor and the conductor Vincenzo Belezza who, it seems, had wanted to impose Francisco Merli for the première. A terrible row ensued and O'Sullivan found his contract cancelled. Understandably put out the tenor brought an action for breach of contract and eventually received a substantial settlement.

In the autumn O'Sullivan embarked on a lengthy tour of the Balkans and central Europe which took him to Budapest, Bucharest, Cluj, Belgrade, and other cities. Tired and with little to show for a two year absence, he returned to France in the summer of 1929 and appeared in Vichy as Roméo opposite Norena. By July he was back at the Paris Opéra, intent on finishing his career and retiring. Some time before, Stanislaus Joyce, brother of the celebrated Irish writer, had heard O'Sullivan sing in Trieste. When Stanislaus met O'Sullivan, he was engaged in reading *A Portrait of The Artist as a Young Man* and was urged to call on Stanislaus' famous brother James, who was also living in the French capital. Writer and tenor met late in 1929 and Joyce felt an immediate regard for his countryman who, after many vicissitudes, was a leading tenor. But his attitude soon became one of overwhelming partisanship when Joyce heard O'Sullivan sing and found himself utterly thrilled by this brilliant voice.

O'Sullivan was still singing well, but at fifty-two he was at an age when most dramatic tenors are content to retire. However, for Joyce, once himself an aspiring tenor, promotion of O'Sullivan's career soon became an all abiding passion. Convinced that O'Sullivan had somehow been held back, Joyce wrote, without

encouragement from his compatriot, to the Metropolitan Opera in New York and to Sir Thomas Beecham in London seeking engagements for his hero. He took to buying rows of seats at the Opéra to cheer O'Sullivan on and had his friends telephone the box office when he knew the tenor was not scheduled to appear to express their disappointment. Respectful of Joyce, O'Sullivan went along with his antics good naturedly, though they did little to endear him to the management. About this time Giacomo Lauri-Volpi appeared in Paris and was applauded by the critics in *Guillaume Tell*. His success infuriated Joyce, who by now idolized O'Sullivan, and before long the writer had composed a letter which O'Sullivan reluctantly signed, (the full text can be found in Richard Ellmann's *James Joyce*, Oxford University Press) challenging Lauri-Volpi to a vocal duel and pointing out that the Italian had cut out over half of Arnold's exacting music. In the event no contest took place and both tenors withdrew with honour.

While he was appearing in Paris, O'Sullivan found time to sing *Guillaume Tell* in Liège. A review gives a good account of his voice at the time:

"The immense rôle of Arnold was undertaken by John O'Sullivan. He had just arrived from the Paris Opéra, where he is currently singing a series of forty performances. We were quite reserved concerning what to expect, America is the country where publicity is king. As soon as he started singing our reservations were transformed into astonishment, then into admiration. Is it possible that a human being has such a powerful, large voice? And we must also say that he is a charmer. Mr. O'Sullivan couldn't have cared if the orchestra was three times larger. The voice has a pure timbre, and a range that seems to have no limit. It emerges without any sign of strain, it flows, and it charms. His French is also without any trace of a foreign accent, added to which his acting capabilities are rarely encountered in any other tenor. He feels the part and you can imagine the triumph that he achieved...

*Express*, 29 November 1929

One happier aspect of Joyce's admiring interference was his promotion of O'Sullivan in Ireland, which soon led to the tenor's return to the Emerald Isle - evidently for the first time since his boyhood - for a concert appearance on April 27, 1930 at Dublin's Theatre Royal. Some five weeks later, on May 27, after further appearances in Paris, O'Sullivan was back in Erin, appearing in Killarney in a celebrity concert with the Austrian pianist and composer Adolphe Borschke. It was a benefit performance for the city's Cathedral where a great uncle, Thomas O'Sullivan, had once served as a priest, before it is said, succumbing to the temptations of Eros and absconding with a female parishioner.

Returning to France he appeared in Vichy, Paris and Marseille where he was carried shoulder high by a crowd of infatuated admirers after one performance. O'Sullivan was still enormously busy and the early to mid-1930's saw numerous European triumphs in Barcelona, Genoa, Naples, Toulouse, Perpignon, Aix-Les-Bains, Montpellier, Lyon, Toulon, Nice, Avignon, Bordeaux and other cities and in Algiers. In spite of the most demanding repertory and a less than temperate life style, O'Sullivan continued to earn laudatory reviews. The following review of

*Guillaume Tell* from Lyon in 1931 is typical of the period:

"One may not appreciate the type of wrestling match that pairs a tenor voice with a high C sharp. People who do not like it must be happy the heroic tenor is an endangered species. The fight will soon end, due to a lack of tenors.

People tried to make these voices redundant by using "demi characters". The experience was tried two years ago at the opera for the centenary of *Guillaume Tell*. The charming Georges Thill sang Arnold. The opera lost all its character. For the second performance Granier came and after that it was finally Sullivan who sang Arnold. We cannot deny the usefulness of such voices, without them a whole repertory would disappear.

For the time being Sullivan is still here. He alone is worth more than all the heroic tenors heard during the last 10 years. What a top, what ease! We must not think that Mr. Sullivan just sings his part, he can also act. I can remember a performance of Tannhäuser in Orange where Mr. Sullivan portrayed the tragic aspects of the hero superbly. His success yesterday was stupendous . . ."

*Le Progres*

O'Sullivan sang in Athens in the Autumn of 1935 and in the spring of the following year he appeared at London's Queen's Hall under Beecham's baton in *La Damnation de Faust* with Vallin and Brownlee.

Now almost fifty-nine he nonetheless continued to perform in France in *Les Huguenots*, *Guillaume Tell* and other demanding roles. Massenet's *Le Cid* is reported in Marseille in 1937, his sixtieth year. But in the spring he returned to Geneva's Grand Théâtre for his final performances, on April 24 and 25, which comprised of Act II of *Guillaume Tell* and Act IV of *Les Huguenots* with the Australian soprano Marjorie Lawrence, earning himself a review any tenor half his age would have been proud of:

". . . Mr.Sullivan and Madame Lawrence were there. It was superb. The first has a generous voice, the timbre is wonderful. His top notes never show any sign of strain, even the most powerful notes never lose their colour. The metal is wonderful, without hardness and brutality. A magnificent tenor . . ."

*La Tribune de Genève*, 27 April, 1937

So he retired spending his remaining years in Paris. He never taught, but as a man of considerable culture, he was in an ideal environment. The war years in German occupied France were difficult, but they were made better by his status as an Irish National, a citizen of a neutral country in a war torn land. His son Jacques entered the Paris Conservatoire during the war and graduated with first prize in Opera in 1945. He embarked on a distinguished career as a baritone in the French speaking world.

John O'Sullivan died in Paris on April 28, 1955.

O'Sullivan's voice is one of the most remarkable dramatic tenor voices on record. Grounded on a solid baritonal foundation, in his prime it covered the better

port of three octaves, capped off with a ringing high D, which he delivered with stentorian power invariably driving those in the gallery into virtual delirium. In spite of his beginnings as a baritone, something he shared with Zerola, Zenatello, Melchior, Rayner, Bergonzi and other celebrated artists, he was always a true dramatic tenor, never a pushed up baritone like Vinay and Zanelli, whose tenor recordings, fine though they are, invariably display some sense of strain. The voice had a strong vibrato, though only British critics, doubtless reared in the hooting traditions of British choral singing, seem to have found it excessive, as they did with other singers. To the rest of the world he was a colossus. Someone who could sing the great high lying dramatic tenor roles night after night and in a stunning fashion, a worthy successor to Duprez and Escalaïs in the French repertory. If he was not as fine a vocal technician as the latter - few tenors were - he was nevertheless a consummate artist, master of more than fifty roles and, from all accounts, he was an accomplished actor. Powerfully built, unusually for a tenor, he stood six feet two, and cut an imposing and handsome figure on stage.

We thus turn to O'Sullivan's recordings, more than fifty sides for The Gramophone Company, Columbia, Parlophone, Odeon and Pathé, with considerable anticipation. Unfortunately although they reflect the more popular side of his art during the period of his international career, displaying a grand tenor voice which delivers virtually everything with tremendous power, they are not fully representative of the artist. Only six of his recordings were made in the French language. These comprise two rather ordinary songs made for HMV (The Gramophone Company) in France in 1916 and four unsatisfactory operatic titles for Pathé in 1930. To his distress, two of the latter were eventually released, almost resulting in a legal action. After his first recordings in March 1916, there was nothing further until his Italian career was underway some seven years later. The acoustical Columbias, made in Italy in 1923 and 1924, predictably offer us nothing in French. Thus a golden opportunity was lost and we are denied the privilege of hearing an essentially French tenor in his true 'fach'. Nothing has survived of roles such as Samson and particularly Eleazar in *La Juive* in which he enjoyed enormous success. It is reported that O'Sullivan personally smashed his Pathé discs of two arias from Halévy's work, so unhappy was he with the recording quality. But whatever the repertory, it was more than difficult to capture on wax the sheer size and excitement created by such an imposing and all powerful voice, and the singer was rarely happy with the results of his efforts in the recording studio. Thus, they remain an unworthy legacy of a remarkable and enigmatic figure, a fascinating if not wholly representative memento of the sort of tenor voice the world is unlikely to hear again.

Michael F. Bott

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The careers of the two sopranos who recorded the Huguenots duet with O'Sullivan are strongly contrasted.

Maria Llacer was born in Valencia in 1888 and enjoyed an international career spanning nearly a quarter of a century. Allegedly she made her début in her home city in 1906 at the age of 18. The same source gives an appearance two years later in Viareggio as Santuzza in *Cavalleria Rusticana*. By 1910 she was appearing in the first performance of Giordano's *Mese Mariano* and in 1912 she created the role of Isabeau in Mascagni's opera. Concentrating on major dramatic roles, she thereafter appeared throughout Italy and Spain, as well as in South America. In 1922 she sang Aïda in Paris. She reached La Scala in 1926, succeeding Raisa and Scacciati as *Turandot*. In the same season she shared the role of Maddalena in *Andrea Chénier* with Cobelli and Muzio. The following season she sang the Siegfried Brünnhilde, Frida Leider taking the role in *Die Walküre* and *Die Götterdämmerung*. Llacer was also the first to appear in the heavy Wagnerian operas in the Spanish provinces. Her final appearances were at La Scala in 1930 singing Brünnhilde in *Die Walküre* and Siegfried. Thereafter she taught in Milan and Valencia. She died in 1962 in Ravenna.

Dora de Giovanni had a brief operatic career which began as Santuzza at the Teatro Verdi in Milan at the end of 1916. This role is one of few points of similarity with Llacer's repertoire. Another, this record suggests, is that de Giovanni also appeared in *Les Huguenots* but there was little else in common. De Giovanni specialized in lyrical and spinto roles. Her one Wagnerian essay was as Elsa in *Lohengrin*. Her career seems to have been exclusively Italian and, apart from a few performances at the San Carlo in Naples and the Fenice in Venice, mostly in lesser houses. In 1920 Mascagni asked her to sing Iris at the Teatro Massimo in Palermo. This attempt to 'relaunch' the opera involved a series of performances throughout Italy, generally conducted by the composer, but mostly with second or third line singers. The exception, and the culmination, was at La Scala late in 1926 with Pertile in the cast. Allegedly de Giovanni was to have sung Iris, but she retired just a few months earlier after her marriage and the role was sung again by Pampanini. Little more is known of the singer. She died in her native Cesena in her ninetieth year.

Stanley Henig

John O'Sullivan made records from 1916 to about 1930. Many artists dislike their records, O'Sullivan seems positively to have loathed his. His first visit to the studio was clearly to support the Allied war effort. The music and flavour of its performance are typical of the times. About six years later he made acoustic records for the Columbia Company. A second group, about two years later, was largely a repetition of the first. With the advent of the electrical process the repertoire was largely the same again for both the Columbia and the Parlophon-Odeon Companies, except for some Irish songs which were not published. Lastly there were some records for the Pathé Company. His dislike for these was so great

that he tried to have them suppressed; we have no record of him in *La Juive* as he smashed the test pressings Pathé sent him.

On the one hand, even today O'Sullivan's huge voice would not be easy to record adequately; on the other, had he heard his records as we can hear them today he might well have been less unhappy about them. In particular, one feels that the Parlophon records, as heard today, are the most successful, the huge voice and the orchestra are better balanced than elsewhere and Frieder Weissmann comes across as a more sensitive conductor than we often hear him.

Apart from a couple of the electric Columbia recordings, O'Sullivan's discs are all hard to come by today and most are scarce or rare. Thus it is particularly pleasing that it has been possible to include on this Compact Disc one version of every piece of music from the published records and, in addition, an unpublished version of 'Celeste Aida', crammed onto a 10" side, and four unpublished Irish songs. The four 12" Parlophon sides have been included not only, as already mentioned, for their musical value, but also as collectors are unlikely otherwise to hear them. However the relatively common Columbia record of the *Il Trovatore* piece has been included in preference to the Odeon version, for although the latter is very rare indeed, it is, frankly, not good and may, indeed, be the source of the view that the artist disliked particularly his Parlophon and Odeon records.

His reluctance to sing *Otello* is all the more puzzling to us as we note that he recorded more music from this role than from any other, and that his reading is alive and exciting, with many original touches.

Finally, both versions of the duet are included, not only as they are the only examples of his work with other artists, but also as both artists had considerable careers and neither is likely to be heard otherwise today.

### Le Cabaret des Trois Couleurs

Sur les bords fleuris de la Seine, il est un joyeux cabaret où tout le long de la semaine on va boire du vin claret. Car à sa porte dès l'aurore, on voit notter dans l'air vermeil un joli drapeau tricolore brodé d'un rayon de soleil. Allons aujourd'hui sous la treille à l'ombre des lilas en fleurs, allons vider une bouteille au cabaret des trois couleurs. Essaimé de pampre et de lierre, depuis cent ans ce gai séjour retentit de chansons guerrières et de joyeux refrains d'amour. Le verre en main sous la tonnelle, jeunes et vieux veulent s'unir pour fêter la France immortelle, la république et l'avenir. Allons citoyens sous la treille à l'ombre des lilas en fleurs, vidons encore une bouteille au cabaret des trois couleurs.

The song tells of a river café on the Seine where there is always a French flag floating (hence the name: the three colours). People go there to empty a bottle. For a hundred years, war and love songs have been heard in this place. Finally everybody is asked to go there to empty another bottle in the name of immortal France.

## Garde à vous les Gas

Attendant de rire aux deux la blague aux lèvres, nous partons fiers et joyeux dans d'autres lieux. Et costauds ou mièvres c'est la même fièvre qui mène au combat les petits soldats. On a quitté ceux qui nous aiment la belle aux yeux troublants, la vieille aux cheveux blancs. Q'importe nous répétons quand même, l'oeil fixé vers là bas, garde à vous, hardi les gas. Et dans les sentiers, jamais en arrière ou vers la frontière, marchons d'un pas altier Plus d'un s'attendrit, mais quelqu'un nous dit quand on est des hommes on ne pleure pas. Garde à vous les petits gas.

On arrive crânement comme à la fête. Plein d'entrain le régiment chante gaiement. Derrière la crête l'ennemi s'appête, allons tous en chœur et haut les cœurs. Partout la vieille âme française, celle des vétérans, a passé dans les rangs le souffle de 93. À guider au combat garde à vous, hardi les gas. Et comme jadis avec le sourire du passé inspire les feuilles en petites files. Narguant le danger lorsqu'il faut charger, on y va bravement tous en chœur, garde à vous les petits gas.

This song tells about ordinary people leaving their homes to go to war. They go joyously to the front; the spirit of 93 has passed through the ranks.

### Notes:

The recordings of 1916 were made in Paris, those of 1926 in London; of 1928, in Berlin and the remainder, in Milan.

2 Llacer and O'Sullivan appeared in a number of performances of *Les Huguenots* in Milan starting in mid-October 1922. Hence it is reasonable to suppose that this record of the duet and records with nearby matrix numbers were made in the Autumn of 1922.

3, 7, 9 and 11 Mitgl. der Staatskapelle, Berlin unter Leitung von Dr. Weissmann

8 The record continues with 'Ora e pe sempre' but later versions, which include the recitative and are better recorded, are preferable.

15 A test pressing of part 1 is inscribed: (Oct.2/24). Whether this is the date of recording or of processing is not clear. In any case, O'Sullivan was singing in Italy at that time. In addition, the B-series came after the 70,000- series and the acoustic process, by which this batch of records was made, was itself soon obsolete. Hence the Autumn of 1924 seems reasonable for this record and those with nearby matrix numbers.

17 and 18 Chante par M. Sullivan avec accompagnement d'orchestre, Paris

16 and 19-22 are published here for the first time from test pressings inscribed:

16 (Sept.24/26) MILAN (Presumably, cf. track 15, 26 Sept. 1924 is meant)

19 WA 3571-1 M23317-1 Factory OK Recording 0

20 WA 3601-1 23345- Factory OK Rec. only fair

21 Rush test WA 3616-1 23360-1 Factory OK Recording A

22 Urgent test/Stamper defect 1" in WA 3628-1 23398-1 Factory OK  
Recording A

19 to 22 Conducted by Hamilton Harty. It is probable that he also conducted the other London recordings.

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Track 17 appears by kind arrangement with EMI Records Ltd.

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