

SYMPOSIUM RECORDS CD 1182

The Harold Wayne Collection – Volume 23

GEORGETTE BRÉJEAN-SILVER (1870 - ?), née Georgette-Amélie Sisout, studied singing in Paris and made her début as Georgette Bréjean-Gravières at the Opéra, Bordeaux in 1890. After singing for a few years in the French provinces, thus gaining useful experience, she made her first appearance in Paris at the Opéra Comique on the 17th September 1894 as Manon in Massenet's opera. She was heard by the composer who was so delighted with her performance that he wrote an additional aria, the famous 'Fabliau', especially for her, and it was included in subsequent scores of the opera. She created the role of La Fée in his *Cendrillon* on the 24th May 1899, and was for a number of years one of the stars of the Opéra Comique.

She recorded for Fonotipia and Odéon de Luxe in 1905-6, and all her recordings, a number of which are included here, are typical of her light soprano, showing her great facility in coloratura.

EDMOND CLÉMENT (1867-1928) was born in Paris and trained as a civil engineer at the Polytechnic. He graduated, but was passionately fond of music and entered the Conservatoire where his exceptional voice and talent were soon recognised.

He made his début at the Opéra Comique as Vincent in Gounod's *Mireille* on the 23rd November 1889 at the early age of twenty-two and soon became the leading lyric tenor at the theatre. In 1909 he was engaged at the Metropolitan Opera, New York. After three years he moved to the Boston Opera Company where he remained until 1913. He died in Nice.

His records of 1905 appeared on the Fonotipia and Odéon de Luxe labels and were very likely made at the same session. In 1912-1913 there were records for Victor and an extensive series for Pathé from 1916 to 1926.

HENRI JEROME (1860- ?) was born in Monplaisir-sur-Rhône and studied singing in Paris. He made his début at the Paris Opéra as Faust on the 15th of October 1888. In 1889 he sang the roles of Leopold in *La Juive*, the Duke in *Rigoletto* and Laerte in *Hamlet*, and in the following year he was Raimbaut in *Robert le Diable*. He created the role of Nerestan in *Zaire* by Paul Veronge de la Nux on the 28th May 1890. The cast also included Eames, Delmas and Escalaïs. He sang at Covent Garden in the 1901 season as Faust, as Raoul in a single performance of *Les Huguenots* and in two of *Le Roi d'Ys*. He sang at the Théâtre de la Gaité in Paris in 1903 as Jean in the first Paris production in French of Massenet's *Hérodiade* together with Calvé and Renaud. Apart from his appearances in Paris his greatest triumphs seem to have been in Bordeaux and Marseilles.

ANITA KINEN appears to have been a wealthy Parisian socialite who was well known as a talented amateur soprano.

FÉLIA LITVINNE (1860-1936) was born in St. Petersburg, her father being Russian and her mother French-Canadian. She was brought up under the very strong French influence of her mother, and always regarded herself as being French at heart. She studied singing in Paris with Mme. Barthe-Banderali and Pauline Viardot and was essentially an exponent of the French school. Her voice was a dramatic soprano of great range and power, and she also possessed a coloratura technique unusual in so large a voice. She made her début in 1884 at the Théâtre des Italiens in Paris as Amelia in *Simone Boccanegra* and was first heard at the Opéra in 1889 as Valentine in *Les Huguenots*. She became particularly celebrated for her singing of Wagner.

Her unusually powerful lower register enabled her to sing many roles usually associated with lower voices such as Dalila and Carmen, but she remained in full command of her soprano voice until her retirement in 1916, after which she sang in concerts for a few years. She was acclaimed as the legitimate successor to the legendary Mlle. Falcon who had a short but brilliant career in the 1830s.

Litvinne's memoirs *Ma vie et mon art* contain the following moving lines: "Ma voix si belle si chaude n'est presque plus. J'ai fait quelques disques très beaux. Je dis toujours en touchant le gramophone 'Ci-git Félia Litvinne' ".- "My voice, so warm, so beautiful hardly exists any more. I made some very lovely records. I always say in touching the gramophone, 'Here lies Félia Litvinne'".

Litvinne taught singing in her retirement and among her many successful pupils were Germaine Lubin and Nina Koshetz.

ÉMILE SCARAMBERG (1863-1938) was born in Besançon. For a time he was engaged as a horn player in a military band. His voice was discovered and after a comparatively short period of training he made his début at the Opéra Comique in 1893 in Grétry's *Richard, Coeur-de-Lion*. While singing in the smaller opera houses in France he was heard by Pedro Gailhard, director of the Paris Opéra, who realized his potential and engaged him for his theatre. He made his début at the Paris Opéra in 1903 as Lohengrin with great success, and also sang as Roméo, the Duke in *Rigoletto*, Raoul in *Les Huguenots*, and Tannhäuser. He appeared in Monte Carlo in 1904 as Turiddu in *Cavalleria Rusticana* and was a highly acclaimed Werther of his day.

He made some splendid Fonotipia records in 1905-6 and, these together with those of Escalaïs, were the most popular Fonotipia records of French tenors. They are of course rarities now, but have been found more frequently than those of Cornubert, David and Jerome.

His career was cut short in 1907, when he lost his voice, after which he taught singing until his death.

Bréjean-Silver

1 Manon-Fabliau Massenet wrote this piece for this artist, whose Manon he greatly admired, and so it is a creator's record. It was sung at the Opéra Comique in place of the famous Gavotte. In the third act there is a fête in the Cours la Reine. Manon is triumphant in her splendour as the mistress of de Brétigny, she sings of her dazzling success. Bréjean-Silver shines in this piece, as one would expect, since it was "tailor-made" for her.

Scaramberg

2 Mireille-Anges du Paradis Vincent is in love with Mireille and they arrange to meet at a distant shrine in the Provence. He arrives first and sings this prayer asking that she may arrive safely too. Scaramberg manages the high tessitura very well and his diction and style are impeccable.

3 Lakmé-Fantaisie Gérald agrees to make a sketch of some of Lakmé's jewels. He is fascinated by their beauty and speculates on the youth and loveliness of their owner. Scaramberg again sings most lyrically; this version could well serve as a model for admiring tenors.

Bréjean-Silver and Scaramberg

4 Faust-Laisser-moi contempler As I have already mentioned, this is from a 13¾-inch disc. The extra playing-time allows the artists to relax and phrase more freely. Both sing with great involvement, making this a beautiful record and a wonderful example of French singing at its best.

Litvinne

5 Aïda-I sacri numi This is the second part of the big aria generally known as 'Ritorna vincitor', but here given in French. Aïda in her distress is torn between her love for Radames, and her devotion to her father and her native country. She begs the gods to help her in this predicament. Litvinne, as always, sings with classical purity of line entirely devoid of any tremolo.

6 L'Africaine-Sur mes genoux Selika, a slave, but formerly an Indian queen, nurses the sleeping Vasco da Gama with whom she is in love. The lovely air, which requires a good command of coloratura technique, is beautifully sung with an agility unusual in a dramatic soprano.

Henri Jerome

7 Rigoletto-Ballade This is a French version of the famous "Questa o quella". It is sung with little sense of style and no suggestion of the licentious character of the duke. In addition, the voice, although easily, produced is rather colourless.

8 Hérodiade-Adieu, donc vains objets John the Baptist is alone in his cell, resigned to the death which awaits him. Jerome sings the air correctly, but with little dramatic conviction and no sense of individuality.

9 Sigurd-Grand Air Again there is little sense of involvement as Sigurd sings the invocation. However it is good to have these examples because the originals are so extremely rare and these transfers provide the only opportunity for most collectors to hear the voice of Jerome and to make their own judgement.

Anita Kinen

10 Stabat Mater-Inflammatum The pianist does his or her best to make up for the lack of orchestra and chorus, but the result is little more than a curiosity. Nevertheless Kinen shows good vocal quality and control, combined with some rather sketchy trills.

Henri Jerome

11 L'Attaque du moulin-Adieu à la forêt I cannot find any details of the plot of this little known opera and know only that Jerome is singing a farewell. He makes rather heavy weather of it.

12 Lakmé-Fantaisie aux divins mensonges This probably the best of the Jerome discs. He sings with more enthusiasm here, but could still take a lesson in style from Scaramberg.

Anita Kinen

13 Il Barbiere di Siviglia-Una voce poco fa Mme. Kinen obviously had a good voice which had been well trained. She sounds rather mature for this aria and her version lacks the sparkle which one expects of the young and lively Rosina. On the other hand she sings with considerable agility in her coloratura passages and the few changes she introduces are in good taste. The ending, minus any sort of cadenza, is very tame but she was obviously a singer of considerable attainment although hardly a Rosina. The piece is spread over two sides which allowed an

unobtrusive change of key from F to E, the top notes thus limited to B \flat and B. In concert, the accompanist would have added a bar of modulation.

14 Marie Magdaleine-O bien aimé Marie Magdaleine was first given as an oratorio at the Théâtre de l'Odéon in Paris on the 11th April 1873 and was repeated at the Opéra Comique in the same form on the 24th March 1874. It was not produced as an opera until the 12th April 1906, again at the Opéra Comique. The solo which Anita Kinen sings is hardly the most inspiring of Massenet's compositions, but she sings it quite well in a quiet way.

Georgette Bréjean-Silver and Émile Scaramberg

15 Roméo et Juliette-Madrigal Both artists sing with pleasant unforced tone in this duet for the young lovers, and their voices blend well. The recording is excellently smooth and forward for its year.

Émile Scaramberg

16 I Pagliacci-Grand Air Scaramberg sings this well-known aria in French and phrases it well, but most opera-lovers would prefer it as "Vesti la giubba". Also, the voice is rather light for this aria.

17 La Favorite-Cavatine *La Favorite* was first produced in French in Paris in 1840, but the aria which Scaramberg sings is better known as 'Spirto gentil'. He sings it quite well, but does not in any way rival the wonderful versions in Italian by Caruso, Gigli and McCormack amongst others.

18 Rigoletto-Ballade Scaramberg certainly makes much more of this than Jerome does, but the French text is a definite handicap; it sounds much better in Italian as "Questa o quella".

19 Faust-Cavatine This is far more pleasing. Scaramberg is naturally much more at home in this aria and sings the top C in a head voice, as we are told, Gounod intended. There is a very substantial cut in the middle section and Scaramberg alters the words in the phrase containing the high C no doubt to provide a vowel sound which makes his approach to the top note easier.

Edmond Clément

20 La Dame Blanche-Ah quel plaisir Clément sings the air, expressing his pleasure at being a soldier, with commendable enthusiasm, but there is little opportunity for him to show the beautiful quality of his voice. There are other records which show off his artistry to much better advantage. John Freestone

Émile Scaramberg

21 Werther- Pourquoi me reveiller Scaramberg is at his very best. He sings with great fluency and beautiful control, making this an outstanding version of Werther's famous aria quoting the poetry of Ossian, which he has translated.

22 Mignon-Elle ne croyait pas Here again Scaramberg is at his very best, phrasing delightfully and showing his mastery over his vocal resources as he expresses his growing love for Mignon.

23 Si j'étais roi-J'ignore son nom This little known opera was first produced at the Théâtre Lyrique in Paris in 1852, and was heard in New York in 1881, but it is difficult to find much information about the work, which is not given outside of France. The tenor here, in a very lovely air, deplures the fact that he does not even know the name or the position of the lady with whom he has fallen in love. Scaramberg again phrases with eloquence and produces a lovely legato line.

A Note on the arrangement of these transfers: The "Paris Fonotipias" in these three volumes of the Harold Wayne Collection are arranged by matrix number. In many cases several takes were needed until a satisfactory recording was achieved. Presumably these were made at the same session as the first take or very soon thereafter. In other cases the use of an orchestra, and very different ambient sound, suggest that retakes were made considerably later as more up to date versions were felt to be necessary. However, a small brass band was used at some of the very earliest sessions; its very distinctive sound is very recognisable. In a few cases, no matrix number can be found, even on copies without labels. It seems that sometimes the matrix number on a second or third take was omitted altogether and a suffix added to the catalogue number instead. Hence tracks 2 and 4 can be placed in sequence by other takes with matrix numbers 686 and 687 respectively.

Acknowledgements: Symposium Records thanks Paul Lewis for assistance with this production and the late Harold Barnes, Paris, George Koussouris, München, and Michael Seil, Notzingen for the following additions to the notes of earlier volumes of this series:

Volume 4 (CD 1077) Bauer's famous catalogue gives Theodorides as an alternative to Theodorini and this has been accepted by most collectors. It now appears that that there were two separate people, but the confusion is understandable for at that time many Greeks lived in Romania and Russia.

1) Elena T(h)eodorini, born 1857 or 1858 in Krajowa, Romania. Her parents, Teodor and Marita, were members of a Greek theatrical family named Theodoropoulos which they abbreviated to Teodorinij alternative spellings, Feodor, Teodor, Teodoru, Teodorul etc.

Début as mezzo-soprano, 1877; as soprano, 1879. Later taught in Buenos Aires (Bidú Sayão amongst her pupils). Returned to Romania in 1925 and died the next year. Her five known records, made in Milan in February 1903, are in volume 4.

2) Elena Theodorides or Theodoridis, born Odessa 1884, sang in Athens from 1902 until her death in 1933. Married, 1908, Michael Vlachopoulos, bass. She is known in Greek musical history by her married name, excelled in such roles as Aida, Amelia, Norma and Tosca. Their daughter, Zoë Vlachopoulos, was also a singer with a considerable career. Two further titles can now be added to those in Bauer and from them we learn of at least one more singer in the family:

Norma-Duetto Mlle. E. Theodorides et Mlle. W. Theodorides Athènes 58519 Gx149
Faust serenade de diable (sic) M. Vlachopoulos Athènes 58533 Gx150

Alfonso Garulli's biography and the state of his voice make an earlier date of birth very probable.

Giovanni Apostolu also appeared at La Scala and at La Fenice and in Monte Carlo where he was the partner of Adelina Patti.

Volume 5 (CD 1081) Mime's Narration from *Das Rheingold* is sung by Hans Breuer. The label does not mention Dr. Otto Briesemeister, but his voice can be heard clearly in the two phrases: "Dich Mime zu binden, was gab ihm die Macht" and "Dich tragen soeben traf wohl se in Zorn".

Volume 6 (CD 1085) Lola Beeth may have been born in 1864 rather than 1860. She also studied with Walery Wisocki in Lwów (Lemberg) and is believed to have appeared also in Bucharest, Budapest and Warsaw. She retired to Berlin where she taught voice. Her pupils include the soprano Käthe Heidersbach.

Two other G&T recordings may exist and she may have recorded for Homocord.

Volume 22 (CD 1173) Pericles Aramis was actually Pericles Aravantinos, a wealthy Greek merchant living in Paris and moving in "Society" circles; a recitalist and friend of Massenet, Sonzogno, Calvé etc. His uncle, Panos Aravantinos, was chief designer at the Staatsoper, Berlin, from 1920 to 1930 and achieved great renown with over sixty operas, among them *Wozzeck*.

Notes by Dr. Wayne about these recordings are to be found with the first part of the Paris series, issued on Compact Disc 1172.

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