

SYMPOSIUM RECORDS CD 1223

The HAROLD WAYNE COLLECTION – Volume 30

Fine specimens of early records of the Fonotipia company are particularly prized by collectors, perhaps more highly than those of any other company. Thus, by way of marking the thirtieth issue in the Harold Wayne Collection, this volume explores the range and diversity of the early Fonotipia catalogue and its setting within the general domain of the Odeon group.

The first records of the Fonotipia company were made at the end of 1904, and from the start there were very close ties with the Odeon company, established in the previous year. Indeed, the Fonotipia company was the Italian arm, based in Milan, of the Odeon company, with its home in Berlin.

With the exceptions of brief forays to Paris and Berlin, Fonotipia's activities were entirely in Italy, whereas Odeon had recording facilities available across Europe, from London to Athens, from Paris to Prague, to Warsaw, St. Petersburg and even Constantinople.

Matters covered by contractual arrangements included territories and interchange of material. Thus various records of each company are found with the other's labels.

The records of both companies were processed and pressed in the same plant on the Weissensee industrial district of Berlin.

Industrial archaeologists will be intrigued by the range of sizes of the records. The smallest and the largest are now the most rare; the smallest, perhaps, seen as cheap and ephemeral; the largest beyond the reach of many pockets and the most likely to get broken.

There was also, one might surmise, an element of social agenda. In the earliest days many Odeon records opened with a spoken announcement. Was this a recognition that some users might be unable to read the labels, or a relic of earlier days when the contents of records - discs and cylinders - were no more than minimally identifiable by eye? In any case, they remain of interest as, frequently, they are examples of the artists' speaking voices. Fonotipia, however, with the high artistic ideals expressed in its prospectus, never carried such announcements. Perhaps working class Italians were assumed to know the music.

The album opens with a specimen of the giant 13³/₄"/35cm records, thus conveniently presenting an item which, for reasons of space, could not be included in Volume 13 (Symposium CD 1113).

Not only were these records the most highly priced in the catalogue but they were, as was perceived to befit their luxury status, issued only in single-sided form.

The smallest size is represented by the McCormack disc. This is so rare that many, even senior collectors of McCormack's records have been unaware of its existence.

In between these was the standard, and most commonly encountered size 10³/₄"/27cm. 12"/30cm records were also issued; 10"/25cm records, the standard size of most companies, came a few years later.

Each location had its own identification letter(s), but Ph was used by Fonotipia on all sites; perhaps this phonetic equivalent was necessary as F was already used in France.

The size was indicated by the letter x.

	Odeon	Fonotipia
7½" 19cm	L 507 (London)	Ph 507
10" 25cm	Bo 507 (Berlin)	Pho 507
10¾" 27cm	xV 507 (Vienna)	xPh 507
12" 30cm	xxF 507 (Paris)	xxPh 507
13¾" 35cm	xxxP 507 (Paris)	xxxPh 507

Prague sessions were organized from Vienna, the imperial capital.

(There are many anomalies, e.g. some 13¾" matrices are xx, and when 10" records were introduced, presumably rather than disrupt the system, the indicator o was allocated. Why Ackté's records have their own series is not known. The number of the Storchio/Stracciari duet appears to be xPh 1124, but this is in the middle of a block of otherwise unused numbers.)

Dr. Wayne has always sought to obtain copies in the finest possible condition, but it will be appreciated that many of these records are of such extreme rarity that even he has not succeeded in finding totally unworn copies. The two test pressings are believed to be unique. Similarly, on account of its ultra-rarity and interest, and to make examples of these artists available at all, we are including, by way of exception, one record which has suffered considerable damage:

Wilhelm Grüning and his recording engineer get off to a none too good start but both soon improve.

Quavery tone due to imperfect rotation of the cutting lathe was not uncommon in the early days but Lucy Malata's record is one of the few examples on Odeon.

One would expect duration of performance to govern choice of size for a particular recording. However, there are many instances of short measure on larger discs and of small discs very full. Original purchasers may or may not have seen this in terms of value for money; but for us, today, with a record which is very full there is an inevitable loss of quality of sound towards the centre. This is evident with the record of Eugenia Burzio which plays for almost five minutes, the last notes all but disappearing beneath the label. The problem is aggravated in this case by the heavy recording level. Overall, this record plays slightly longer than the larger 13¾"/35cm side discussed earlier.

Generally accompaniments were discreet; the soloist was the attraction. Early attempts at orchestral accompaniment, usually small groups of brass, tended to be strident and over-loud. Bressler-Gianoli and her pianist, however, are determined to give a full-scale performance together. After the second piece there is quite a conversation in the studio.

On the face of it this may seem an unusual compilation to appear on one Compact Disc. Yet the rationale for this is simple. All the selections are fascinating rarities issued in the early days of Fonotipia and its sister company Odeon.

We start with the very rare 13¾"/35cm disc of the coloratura soprano Georgette Bréjean-Silver (1871-); her career is discussed in the notes to Volume 22 of this series.

Next we have two titles by Marie-Thérèse de Ségur, Comtesse de Guerne. Little is known of her except that she was a very accomplished amateur and no doubt was a popular singer in the fashionable salons of Paris. Her record is a major rarity.

The unpublished disc of Rosina Storchio (1874-1945) and Riccardo Stracciari (1875-1955) is probably a unique copy, and the same applies to the duet sung by Fausta Labia (1872-1935) and Emilio Perea (1884-).

Luisa Bianco-Tamagno was a niece of the famous tenor and sang at charity concerts with him in Turin and Cremona in the years 1901 and 1903. She died in 1914.

For a long time it was generally accepted that records of Elena T(h)eodorini and Eleni Theodoridou were by one and the same person, but thanks to an excellent article by Takis A. Kollintzas in *The Record Collector* of March 1997 we now know that they were different artists. The *Norma* duet is definitely by Eleni Theodoridou (1884-1935) and her sister Victoria-Anastasia Theodoridou (1882-c.1960), and the copy used on this Compact Disc has suffered some damage but, again, is very likely the only surviving copy. Eleni married Mihális Vlachopoulos (1873-1956) and it is therefore of great interest to hear his voice. He was the leading bass of Hellenic Melodrama between 1905 and 1937 and appeared in more than one capacity. To quote Mr. Kollintzas he "was also stage manager, designer, impresario and financier as need arose".

Málka Bobková was a leading Czech soprano who was born in 1874 and died in Prague in 1956. She created the role of the Water Nymph in Dvorak's *Rusalka* in 1901, and this is therefore an important creator's record.

Wilhelm Grüning was born in Berlin in 1858 and died there in 1942. He gained experience as he rose through the hierarchy of German provincial houses. In 1895 he appeared in the première of Kienzl's *Der Evangelimann*. In the years 1891 to 1898 he sang with success at Bayreuth, and from 1898 to 1911 in Berlin where, in 1904, he was the creator of the tenor role in Leoncavallo's *Roland von Berlin*. Thus these very rare Odeons are of particular interest, the more so as the work is never heard today.

I have been unable to find biographical details of Lucy Malata. Her career was presumably in the smaller houses of the German-speaking countries.

Maria Farneti was born in Milan in 1878 and made her début in 1898. She rapidly acquired a considerable reputation for her performances in verismo roles and was chosen by Mascagni to create the name part in *Iris*. In 1902 Mascagni included her in a company with which he toured the United States of America. Her successes at La Scala and the Colón were sensational. Her marriage to an advocate in 1911 marked the end of her career. Her few records, made mainly after her retirement, are keenly sought after. She died in Milan in 1955.

Eugenia Burzio was born in Turin in 1872. She was trained in Milan but returned to Turin for her first appearances. Her first appearance in Milan was in Alfano's *Risurrezione*. This was in 1906. The following year, her performance of the heroine in the première of Catalani's *Loreley* was a triumph. She had a great career in Italy, particularly in works of the verismo school where her talents as an actress were very impressive. She recorded not only for Fonotipia but also for Columbia and Pathé. Her career was brought to a close by a heart condition in 1919 and she died in 1922.

Clotilde Bressler-Gianoli was born in Geneva in 1872 and made her début there as Dalila in 1891. She appeared at the Opéra Comique in 1900, admired in the role of Carmen. She appeared with success in Italy, France, Belgium and North America. Her one disc was made for Odeon in 1906. She died in Geneva in 1912.

Jeanne Bourdon was a leading dramatic soprano at the Paris Opéra from 1909 to the late 1920s. She made her début there as Brunehild in Reyer's *Sigurd* and appeared in

many Wagnerian and other heavy roles, often in the company of Paul Franz and Jean-François Delmas. The solo from Gounod's *Cinq Mars* is one of four very rare sides recorded shortly before the first World War.

Alfred Galand (or Galland) made his début at the Opéra-Comique in 1888, and sang the parts of Gérald, Wilhelm Meister and Rodolphe (Alfred in the French text of *La Traviata*). In 1895 he appeared at Monte Carlo as Fernand in *La Favorite*, with Deschamps-Jehin and Melchissèdec. His records, mainly of operetta and waltz-songs, are very rare.

Sybil Seligman (c.1868-1935) was a gifted amateur singer who, like the Comtesse de Guerne, no doubt was often heard in the fashionable salons of Paris. She was a pupil of Tosti and a great friend and confidante of Puccini, who admired her talents and wrote many letters to her .

The 7½" Odeon of John McCormack was virtually unknown even to the keenest collectors of the great tenor's discs, and it is for this reason that it appears in this selection of rarities. McCormack made a number of 7" G&Ts of course, but I had never understood that he made anything for Odeon smaller than his 10¾" discs. This is a pleasant surprise.

Aino Ackté (1876-1944) was a Finnish soprano. Her mother, from whom she had her first lessons, and her sister were also singers. She studied in Paris and made her début there as Marguerite in 1897 at the Opéra. Her records appeared on the Light Blue Zonophone, Black G&T and Fonotipia labels. This title was made in 1905. It appeared as Fonotipia 39059 and as Odeon 36869. She sang mainly at the Opéra but also appeared at the Opéra Comique in 1906. She sang at Covent Garden in 1907, 1910 and 1913, and was apparently a superb Salome in Richard Strauss's opera.

Giuseppe Bellantoni was born in Messina in 1880, and his career was mainly in Italy. His records are very rare indeed. Four titles for Fonotipia, of which two are included here, were made in 1909. Later came the double-sided disc of the cavatina and cabaletta from Pacini's *Saffo*, which can be heard in Volume 28 of this series, where his career is discussed. He even recorded two titles electrically: "Lolita" and "Occhi di fata".

1 GEORGETTE BRÉJEAN-SILVER Il Barbiere di Siviglia-Air de Rosine
Bréjean-Silver sings the aria in French. The changes she introduces are original and certainly not traditional. She sings with bright, typically French, tone and makes light of any technical difficulties. The recording is forward and the copy sounds absolutely mint, which is wonderful considering the age and rarity of the original disc.

2 MARIE-THÉRÈSE DE SÉGUR, COMTESSE DE GUERNE Faust-Air des bijoux
Although recorded in Milan, the artist is certainly French and she was without doubt a well-trained soprano with a voice of excellent quality. Presumably as a member of the French aristocracy she did not sing professionally. There are one or two points which are not in the traditional style. For example, after the opening trill she takes a breath before the rapid ascending scale. The voice is well recorded, and again the copy is in first rate condition.

3 MARIE-THÉRÈSE DE SÉGUR, COMTESSE DE GUERNE Rigoletto- Caro nome
Although the singer was French she sings in really excellent Italian. At the close of the aria she sings the reprise of Caro nome and finishes with a very long trill; a trill, not only long, but also very beautiful, and no doubt the singer had every intention of impressing the listener with it.

4 ROSINA STORCHIO & RICCARDO STRACCIARI La Traviata-Pura siccome
One wonders why this disc was never published because the singing, particularly by Stracciari, is really superb. Both artists sound really involved, Storchio in particular. She suggests the torment which Violetta feels of the great sacrifice demanded of her. Her voice has a slight rapid vibrato, but it is well controlled and never excessive.

5 FAUSTA LABIA & EMILIO PEREA Mefistofele-Lontano, lontano
Unlike the duet of Storchio and Stracciari, which although unpublished is well recorded, the sound here is definitely not up to the usual standard of the early Fonotipias. The orchestral accompaniment is much too prominent and at times almost drowns the voices. This is the exquisite duet in which Faust visits Marguerite in prison and begs her to come away with him, but this version lacks the delicacy which is required.

6 LUISA BIANCO-TAMAGNO & ELVINO VENTURA Adriana Lecouvreur-Ma dunque
In this duet Adriana finds out that Maurizio, whom she had thought was just an ordinary subaltern, is in fact the Count of Saxony. He replies that he is passionately attached to her but, she doubts his devotion and says that she feels unworthy of him. The two artists sing with passion and involvement, and of course it is wonderful to hear the voice of Tamagno's niece.

7 ELENA AND VICTORIA-ANASTASIA THEODORIDES Norma-Mira o Norma
We now know that Victoria-Anastasia was a sister of the more famous Elena, and since Elena sang Norma we must assume that her sister sings Adalgisa. There is damage to the first few grooves, but in view of the extreme rarity of the disc it has been included. The first section is sung well by both voices but the cabaletta, which is also included, has to be sung too fast to contain it all on a 10 3/4" disc. It is sung in Greek and is an interesting souvenir.

8 MICHAEL VLACHOPOULOS Faust-Sérénade
This recording shows a good basso cantante voice. The interpretation is the traditional one, although the laughs at the conclusion sound rather artificial.

9 MÁLKA BOBKOVÁ Rusalka-Zpev lesni Zinky
This is a very important disc, as Bobková, who was one of the leading sopranos in

Prague, was also the creator of this aria sung by the Water Nymph. The voice is of lovely quality and it is very well recorded for the time. I found this a delightful record.

10 WILHELM GRÜNING Roland von Berlin-Treue dem Gebot

The opera was apparently only a "succes d'estime", despite the appearance of Farrar as the leading soprano. Grüning's records are on the whole disappointing although he had a distinguished career in Germany.

11 WILHELM GRÜNING Roland von Berlin-Vision

It is good to have the opportunity to sample this work, concerning which most collectors have been curious, but, alas, the music turns out to be decidedly dull. This no doubt accounts for the great rarity of these records.

12 LUCY MALATA Manon-Gavotte

Two titles by the singer are given in Bauer; this is an additional one. This, like the other records, is sung in German. Possibly this accounts for a version which sounds rather stilted and lacking in the charm which the song demands, although the voice itself is quite good.

13 MARIA FARNETI Otello-Ave Maria

Farneti sings the famous Ave Maria with good tone and enunciation and also sounds involved. She manages well the difficult arpeggio on the penultimate phrase, rising to a high G sharp. The Vibrato is well-controlled.

14 MARIA FARNETI La Wally-Ne mai dunque avro pace

In this passage, from Act 3 of the opera, Wally sings that she can find no peace. She is in love with the young soldier Hagenbach, but he has left on an unspecified journey without telling her. This verismo music suits her voice and personality very well.

15 EUGENIA BURZIO La Forza del Destino-Pace Pace mio Dio!

This is Leonore's final cry of despair as she asks God to give her peace at last. Burzio was a very famous exponent of Verdi and she sings here with beautifully turned phrases. Her full voice is always exciting, and she introduces some lovely pianissimi as well.

16 CLOTILDE BRESSLER-GIANOLI Carmen-Chanson bohème

This piece is usually given by starting fairly slowly and gradually increasing the speed as the excitement grows. For some reason the accompanist starts at a breakneck speed and the singer rushes madly after. However, this gives the artist little opportunity to produce tone.

17 CLOTILDE BRESSLER-GIANOLI Carmen-Air des cartes

This is much more satisfactory and the singer produces lovely tone, excellent enunciation, and considerable involvement. The sense of impending tragedy is well caught.

18 JEANNE BOURDON Cinq Mars-Nuit resplendissante

Jeanne Bourdon's voice as heard on this very rare record, is that of a lyrico-dramatic soprano of beautiful warm quality. She phrases elegantly. This is a very impressive record.

19 ALFRED GALAND L'etoile d'amour (Delmet)

This rare disc shows an attractive tenor voice and considerable artistry in a pleasant light ballad, later recorded by Vanni-Marcoux. In vocal quality, schooling and style Galand is on a par with his better-known Parisian lyric-tenor contemporaries on record.

20 & 21 SYBIL SELIGMAN Malia and Io son l'amore (Tosti)

Although Seligman never sang professionally it is clear that she had a beautiful mezzo-soprano voice which she used with considerable artistry. She sings most stylishly in these

songs; her teacher, Tosti, certainly knew how to write for the voice.

22 & 23 JOHN McCORMACK *Come back to Erin* and *The dear little shamrock*
These are typical recordings of the great tenor at the commencement of his career. The voice sounds beautiful, and the Irish brogue is just right for these songs, which he sings in inimitable fashion.

24 AINO ACKTÉ *Si j'avais de vos ailes* (Messenger)

It is difficult to realise, listening to this record, that Ackté's sensational début at Covent Garden was as Salome in Richard Strauss's opera. Here she sings a light song with grace and excellent coloratura technique, and although she was Finnish, the style is typically French, and with immaculate diction. The accompaniment is very pedestrian and does nothing to help the singer.

25 & 26 GIUSEPPE BELLANTONI *Chianutedda mia* and *Luna cortese*

It is clear from these recordings that Bellantoni possessed a very beautiful high baritone voice, which he used with great artistry. The songs in themselves are ordinary, but he makes them interesting by his sensitive phrasing and warm interpretations.

John Freestone

Dr. Wayne writes: With the exception of those of Ackté, Burzio and Farneti, every recording on this fabulous disc is either unique or tremendously rare. The Ackté was re-issued on Odeon in the early 1930s but in its original issue, as transferred here, it is a major rarity. Similarly, the Burzio was re-issued in the early 1920s. All the 69000 series 10¾" Fonotipias are quite rare; particularly those which were released during the first world war as was the Farneti. In a realm of their own are the unique unpublished Storchio/Stracciari and Labia/Perea items, which were once in the possession of Alessandro Bruscoli of Florence. Incidentally, he also had, in 1964, an unpublished Bellantoni, Xph 4298, "Alla vita" from Ernani. Dr. Otto Müller, a musicologist of distinction and teacher of the voice, was so well-informed as to store in his collection the rarest of rare Odeons, including Lucy Malata, Bressler-Gianoli and Theodorides/Vlachopoulos. The creator record by Wilhelm Grüning was part of the great Bauer legacy together with the De Guerne. Málka Bobková in her creator role was owned by Roland Teuchtler, who was the best source of Prague rarities in my experience, after Professor Wilhelm.

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