

## SYMPOSIUM RECORDS CD 1242

# The FOUR-MINUTE CYLINDER Part I

This volume includes biographical details also for the artists in the companion volume, CD 1243; that volume will include an account of the Edison 4-minute cylinder project.

ADELINA AGOSTINELLI, soprano (1882 Bergamo–1954 Buenos Aires)

After studying with her teacher and future husband, Giuseppe Quiroli, she made her début in Pavia and soon after joined a touring troop by which she gained experience travelling through Greece, Turkey, Russia, Belgium and Holland. Her greatest successes were probably in the Spanish-speaking countries. In the season 1910 to 1911 she sang at Oscar Hammerstein's Manhattan Opera, before returning to Italy to appear in Milan with Mattia Battistini in *Simon Boccanegra* and in the Milan première of *Der Rosenkavalier*.

At Covent Garden and the Théâtre des Champs Elysées she was well received in 1912. Subsequently she appeared mainly in South America with her second husband. It is a pity when an artist of her undoubted ability and with such good musicianship is so little known through her records.

MERLE ALCOCK, contralto, née Tillotson (1890 Andover, Missouri–1975 Phoenix, Arizona)

She trained in America and sang there under her maiden name, but her début as Alcock was in London in 1914. She returned to America and followed the career of a concert and oratorio singer until 1923 when she turned to opera, starting with successes at the Metropolitan Opera House. Similarly, her name appears as Tillotson on Columbia records of 1910, but on her later Edison issues it is Alcock.

BLANCHE ARRAL, soprano, née Klara Lardinoise (1864 Liège–1945 Cliffside, N.Y.)

She was a student in Paris of Mathilde Marchesi. Her first engagement was at the Opéra-Comique, starting in 1880. She appeared in mainly small rôles and thus was included in the première of *Manon*, albeit only as a servant.

Surprisingly, the experience gained did not lead her up the operatic scale. Instead she travelled on concert tours, even unto the four corners of the earth. Perhaps she did eventually want to settle, for in 1902 a contract was concluded with the Metropolitan Opera, only to be torn up before the ink was dry. But she did appear once again in opera; in San Francisco.

Her last appearances were on American radio as late as 1935. Her voice, and her nerves, must still have been in good state as this was long before the possibility of pre-recording a programme. Her records, for Victor and for Edison, are none of them easy to find and all of them evidence of an excellent voice, superbly efficient in fioritura; but one would expect that of a Marchesi pupil.

PIERRE ASSELIN, tenor

Asselin is believed to have been of French-Canadian origin. The Edison company clearly expected great things of him as they issued his records in the Mauve category. Alas, no mention of this artist has been found in any of the standard reference works.

MARIA AVEZZA, soprano (1880, probably in Italy– ? )

Her début took place in Trieste in 1904 and she became a fine comprimaria. She appeared at various Italian opera houses, including Parma in 1905 and 1906, Pisa and the San Carlo, Naples in 1907. She was a member of an American company and appeared in Buenos Aires from 1910 to 1913. In 1917 and 1918 she was again in Naples; and in 1922 and 1923 at La Scala, Milan. She had a long and successful career, which took in many major houses, but always in small roles. Her recordings seem to be limited to eight duets with Daddi for Edison.

DAN BEDDOE, tenor (1863 Aberdare, Glamorgan–1937 New York)

He had an alto voice which was enjoyable to hear, and it broke to reveal a tenor which at once started to win competitions. In 1883 he won the Eisteddfod of Wales tenor section, prize 3 Guineas. In 1887 he began a six month tour of North America with seven other winners. During this tour he was offered a post at a church in Cleveland, Ohio. He moved there, took an office job and began to study singing. In 1893 he moved to Pittsburgh. But in Pittsburgh things were little better. Then, in 1902, at the age of 39, an engagement by Walter Damrosch led suddenly to two decades of unceasing employment in concert and oratorio, and as a soloist in local opera groups throughout the country. Highlights of this period included the American première of *Das Lied von der Erde* under Fritz Reiner, and the "Choral" Symphony under Mahler. He continued to hold church posts, now in New York, probably out of religious conviction, but perhaps also out of faith in regular employment. In New York he continued his studies.

During the war, to his heavy schedule he added concerts for troops and for the Red Cross. The war over, he moved to a teaching post in Cincinnati. He now sang in public only locally except for keeping up a few major engagements such as an annual *Messiah* at the Carnegie Hall, until about 1933. He recovered from a serious street accident in 1935. He died suddenly in New York where his son was appearing on Broadway.

Victor, Edison, Columbia and Brunswick made between them a total of 39 titles of which only 17 were issued. Apart from that there was a series of religious pieces for The Rodeheaver Record Coy. This was his only cylinder.

ALESSANDRO BONCI, tenor (1870 Cesena, Italy–1940 Viserba, near Rimini)

His father was a comb maker so that although his voice was noticed early, there was no alternative for him but to become an apprentice in the footwear trade. Fortunately, friends made it possible for him to study in Pesaro, and then in Paris. His first engagement was as leading soloist with a choir ; only in 1896 was he able to make his début in opera. Very rapidly indeed he climbed to La Scala, Milan, the goal of every aspiring Italian opera singer. By 1900 he was appearing at Covent Garden, in casts which included Melba, and being warmly praised by the critic of *The Times*. In 1906 he made his American début as principal tenor of Hammerstein's Manhattan Opera House, opened that year as a challenge to the Metropolitan. At Covent Garden Bonci had been compared with Caruso whilst both were at the same house. Now he was in direct competition. Despite legal wrangling, Bonci was persuaded to move to the Metropolitan. The move was probably a mistake on Bonci's part. Although his voice was smaller than Caruso's, his comprehensive technique of singing told him how to be adequate without strain, but the range of parts suited to his voice was more limited and he was less popular than the already well-established younger man. Thus he appeared less often and became

extremely jealous. In 1909 he sang at the Teatro Colón, Buenos Aires, as always only in company of leading artists. He left the Metropolitan in 1910 and made a recital tour of North America. After a season in Spain and Chicago, and another in South America, he returned home to obey the call to arms as a pilot and aircraft mechanic. After the war he sang until the mid-'20s and then taught in Milan.

He made many records for Fonotipia, and a few for Edison, each company hoping he would be the answer to Caruso (firmly anchored to Victor). There were also series for Columbia. There is a sweetness to the voice which is surely honey in moderation, but which might be mere sugar if taken in excess. Similarly, his vibrato might be perceived as warm, but then irksome. It should be stressed that such comments, and of others also, are of a singer recorded close to the apparatus, and might not be fair of the sound in a large auditorium.

LUCREZIA BORI, soprano, née Lucrecia Borja y Gonzalez de Riancho (1887 or 1889 Valencia–1960 New York)

Her father was an army officer, her mother was keenly interested in the arts, particularly music. Borja is the Spanish spelling of Borgia, of which family she was a descendant. At the age of six she sang a coloratura show piece at a benefit concert. At fourteen she began to have her voice trained at Valencia Conservatory. She wore down family opposition to a career in singing, and travelled to Milan and Rome for further study. Her début was as Micaëla (*Carmen*) in the latter city in 1908. During the Metropolitan Opera's Paris season of 1910 she substituted at very short notice for Lina Cavalieri, thus appearing at a major centre of opera, with no less than Caruso, and under the baton of Toscanini. She was completely successful and was engaged for the New York house the moment her existing commitments allowed. Her début there was also more prestigious than anticipated: as Frieda Hempel was indisposed Bori had to appear on the opening night of the season (1912).

In 1915, however, she had to undergo an operation on her vocal chords. She was able to resume her career only in 1919. In 1921, after trying herself out in the smaller house of Monte Carlo, she came back to the Metropolitan and remained there until 1936.

Her first records were made by Edison in London at about the time of her Paris appearance. Thereafter she was always a Victor artist. It is interesting to compare this version of Mimi's music with her singing of it in a broadcast of 1937. (Symposium 1204).

THOMAS CHALMERS, baritone (1884 New York–1966 New York)

After studies in Florence and some appearances in Italy he sang with various opera companies in North America. From 1917 he sang at the Metropolitan Opera with increasing success until an operation in 1922 prevented further appearances.

His only records were for Columbia and Edison.

GUIDO CICCOLINI tenor (1885 ? –1963 Rome)

He was trained by Antonio Cotogni (1831 - 1918), whose pupils included also Mattia Battistini, Carlo Galeffi, Beniamino Gigli, Dinah Gilly, Giacomo Lauri-Volpi, Virgilio Lazzari and Jean de Reszke. His début in Bologna as Alfredo in *La Traviata* was followed by appearances in the British Isles, Belgium, France, Holland and then Russia. In 1911 he was a member of Melba's Opera company in Australia. He sang in seasons in Boston, Chicago and Havana, and at the funeral of his friend, Rudolph Valentino.

Records of him were made by The Gramophone Company in Europe and by

Edison in America. It is a fine, serviceable voice used, even in verismo parts, with restraint and musicality.

FLORENCIO CONSTANTINO, tenor (1868 Bilbao–1919 Mexico City)

In 1889, after working for a while on the Spanish railway, he and his wife emigrated to the Argentine where he purchased a thrasher by means of a loan, and set up as a contractor to farmers requiring assistance with harvesting. He seems to have sung as he worked, and to have been encouraged and offered support to study singing in Buenos Aires. By 1896 he was able to appear locally in *Lucia di Lammermoor*, which led to a period of study in Italy. Success began to come in 1898, with work in Holland, Russia and Italy. After great successes in the Spanish Peninsular he returned to Buenos Aires. He was now travelling to all the major opera houses.

Probably the high point of his career was at the Metropolitan Opera in 1910 when he appeared in roles also in the repertoire of Enrico Caruso. He now decided to fulfil his ambition of building an opera house for Bragada, his adopted home town, and this was accomplished with astonishing quickness. In 1912, by a terrible accident, he stabbed Giovanni Gravina, the noted bass, in the eye which, presumably, was the cause of his death shortly after. In 1919 he seems to have suffered from altitude sickness whilst travelling to Mexico City. He recovered but succumbed to further illness.

Between 1903 and 1912 his visits to the studios of Pathé, Gramophone and Typewriter, Edison, Excelsior, Favorit, Eden, Odeon, Victor and Columbia produced over 200 recordings. Although some of the early ones are musically severely truncated, it is hard to suggest any that are vocally disappointing. This blue Amberol cylinder turned out to be his very last recording of all. Running to 4½ minutes it allows him to sing the aria comfortably and without cuts. The inclusion of a spoken announcement, clearly by the artist, is very strange on a record made this late.

FRANCESCO DADDI, tenor (1864 Naples–1945 Chicago)

His début was in Milan in 1891 and the following year he created the role of Beppo in *I Pagliacci*. He had ever increasing success in buffo parts on many Italian stages. From 1907 to 1910 he sang at the Manhattan Opera and for the following decade in Chicago. He was also conspicuously successful at Ravinia Park, continuing until the mid-'20s. Even after that there were occasional appearances. In his later years he ran a voice school in Chicago. The voice seems heavy for buffo parts; in fact Daddi subsequently changed to the bass register. The timbre may not be particularly pleasing but it carries an engaging musical personality. In addition to Edison, Daddi worked for Columbia and Victor.

PETER DAWSON, bass-baritone (1882 Adelaide–1961 Sydney)

After a period as a boxer he came to England in 1902 to study singing with Sir Charles Santley. His short stature precluded a career in opera, though he did appear once or twice in small parts. However, on the concert platform and in the recording studio his success was phenomenal. He sang popular songs, art songs, oratorio and opera; the slightest piece in his hands could be made worth hearing. The soundness of his training allowed him a long career; he was broadcasting as late as 1955 and his last records were made two years after that. It is said that such was his ability at sight-reading that a finished record could often be produced from a piece of music only that moment put in front of him.

There must be over 3,000 records of him, including some under various pseudonyms. The effectiveness of the Mendelssohn piece is slightly diminished as Dawson has to transpose it up to suit his range, but we are more than compensated by his pure, stylish, clean singing.

MARIE DELNA, contralto, née Ledau (1875 Meudon–1932 Paris)

Her voice was discovered whilst working in the kitchen of her father's hotel. After two years of study in Paris she appeared as Dido in *Les Troyens* at the Opéra-Comique. She was 17. She sang the part of Charlotte in the French première of *Werther* in 1893. She was Quickly in the French première of *Falstaff* 1894, and in 1895 she was in the first performance of Godard's *La Vivandière*.

She took part in the local première of Bruneau's *L'Attaque au Moulin* in Paris in 1893, in London in 1894, and in New York in 1910.

In the years 1898 to 1900 she was much acclaimed in Milan. She left the stage on her marriage in 1903 but returned in 1907. In 1909, at Toscanini's invitation she went to New York but like certain wines, she did not travel well. She took part in the Verdi centenary celebrations of 1913. In 1922 she retired from the opera stage but continued to give concerts until 1930. She lost all her possessions and died in the poorhouse.

Her rich, sensuously beautiful sound is preserved only on Edison and Pathé recordings.

GASTON DUBOIS, tenor (1879 ? – ? )

Dubois was educated in Paris by Paul Lhérie, creator of Don José in *Carmen*, and, after his voice moved down, creator of Don Carlos in the revised version. In 1901 Dubois made his début at the Opéra as Vasco da Gama; he remained there for two decades. He sang a wide range of rôles in works ranging from *Don Giovanni* to Stravinsky's *Renard*. He sang frequently in the provinces, being particularly successful in Nice, and in the Principality of Monaco where he appeared until at least 1930.

MARIA FARNETI, soprano (1877 Forli–1955 San Varano, near Forli)

She studied at Pesaro Conservatory and made her début in 1898 in Turin. By 1902 she was sufficiently experienced to be included in a troupe bound for North America.

From 1908 to 1913 she sang each season in the major houses of South America. However, she had married in 1911 and retired from the stage in 1913. She was especially celebrated in the new verismo works.

She made records for Fonotipia and, long after her retirement, for Columbia. This is her only record for Edison.

CARLO GALEFFI, baritone (1882 Malamocco, near Venice–1961 Rome)

Like Ciccolini, a pupil of Cotogni; he made his début in Rome as Amonasro. By 1910 he was appearing in New York with Melba in *La Traviata*. From 1913 on he was accorded enormous acclaim in Milan in works which included several local première. In Chicago, Buenos Aires, Paris, Vienna, Amsterdam etc. he sang always to enthusiastic audiences. He did not finally leave the stage until as recently as 1955. It was a very large and opulent voice, with high notes well suited to the style developed by Verdi.

His records, mainly by The Gramophone Company and Columbia, include a number of "complete" operas.

CHARLES HACKETT, tenor (1887 Worcester, Massachusetts–1942 New York)

His parents and his five siblings were all musical. He performed in public before his voice broke. His first employment was in an architect's office. After a year he was dismissed, but it was an amicable parting with sincerely given advice to go into music. He took singing lessons, supporting himself and paying for them by singing in church services.

A student performance as Faust attracted some engagements. In New York he was successful in finding work in the Victor studio, and in finding a position as soloist in a large church. By 1911 he was giving concerts and in that year he sang in the Verdi *Requiem* at the Carnegie Hall. In 1912 he left for a period of study in Italy; this was made possible by a wealthy patroness. At an audition in Paris in 1914 he was suddenly asked to replace a sick tenor as Faust that very evening. This led to an engagement.

By the end of 1916 he was appearing at La Scala and had been engaged by the Colón Opera in Buenos Aires. There he was befriended by Caruso and married, Caruso insisting on being best man. Successes at La Scala and the Colón continued until he returned in 1919 to New York. His appearances at the Metropolitan Opera ceased after a couple of seasons and he moved to Chicago. Between seasons he was also appearing in Europe, as far off as New Zealand, and in recitals at home. In 1934 he returned to the Metropolitan Opera and next year began to teach at the Juilliard School. His death resulted from shock after what should have been a routine operation.

He recorded for Edison in 1912 and for Columbia from 1919 to 1928. The duet is probably the most interesting of the Edison recordings.

MELITTA HEIM, soprano (1888 Vienna–1950 London)

She studied in Vienna, made her début as Gilda in Graz in 1909, and then, from 1911 to 1916, was based at Frankfurt-am-Main. During this time she also appeared in her home town and in London. In 1917 she moved to Vienna where she was greatly admired particularly as Kostanze (*Die Entführung aus dem Serail*). A nervous complaint compelled her to leave the operatic stage in 1922, but after that there were some concert appearances. In 1938 she and her mother, who were Jewish, were fortunate to be able to reach London, but, without means, she had even at times to work as a cleaning lady.

There are records of her on the Odeon label. This is one of the two pieces which she sang for Edison. It is a fine voice, the difficult writing is no problem for her.

FRIEDA HEMPEL, soprano (1885 Leipzig–1955 Berlin)

After studying in Berlin she made her début in Breslau in 1905. The same year she was engaged by the Schwerin Opera and appeared at Bayreuth. In 1907, at the behest of the Kaiser, she was transferred to Berlin. Her career there was a vast success, as was her appearance at Covent Garden the same year. From 1912 to 1920 she was on the roster of the Metropolitan Opera, appearing in many performances with Caruso. After a season in Chicago she appeared only in concerts. These included her "Jenny Lind" Concerts in which her dress and her repertoire accorded with the earlier artist. Her last appearance was as recently as 1951. Her repertoire was extensively recorded by Odeon, The Gramophone Company, Edison, Victor and Polydor. It was a beautiful voice, her coloratura was astonishing and her attack of high notes fearless.

KARL JÖRN, tenor (1873 Riga–1947 Denver, Colorado)

He made his début at Freiburg in Breisgau as Lionel in *Martha*. After gaining

experience in Zürich and Hamburg he moved to Berlin, where he was very much liked, in 1902. From 1905 he also appeared at Covent Garden. From 1908 to 1914 he was at the Metropolitan Opera, New York. In 1914 he returned to Berlin, but only temporarily, for, despite his popularity and the Kaiser's express wish, he returned to America. He retired and lost everything through bad investments. He lived in considerable poverty until 1928 when Johanna Gadski invited him to join the German Opera Company on a tour of North America. He was particularly well liked, especially as Tristan. The success of the tour enabled him to open a studio in New York.

MARGARET KEYES, contralto (1875 Chicago–1940 Chicago)

Only after a considerable career as a concert artist did she decide to appear in opera. This was in her home town in 1912. However, she appears to have sung only in small roles. She sang for Columbia as well as for Edison, but for the former only ballads and light songs. It was a fine voice; presumably reasons of family or temperament limited the career built on it.

SELMA KURZ, soprano (1874 Bielitz, Silesia, Austria–1933 Vienna)

Talent and voice were obvious very early and a member of the Esterhazy family sponsored her studies in Vienna. She completed her training with Mathilde Marchesi in Paris and also had advice from Jean de Reszke. In 1899 after gaining experience in Hamburg and in Frankfurt-am-Main she moved to Vienna where she achieved phenomenal success under Gustav Mahler, and where she remained until her retirement in 1929 after appearing on almost one thousand occasions. She sang with equal facility from *Zigeunerbaron* to *Ariadne auf Naxos*, from Johann Strauss to Richard Strauss. She was a great success at Covent Garden, but her American appearance were limited to one concert (New York, 1921). Others may have equalled her as a coloratura soprano, but none excelled her. The voice had a rare beauty, the accuracy and deftness in difficult high passages takes away the breath, the trill is in the group which includes Patti, Melba and Tetrazzini, and clearly Edison saw engaging her in these terms. However, she does sound somewhat matronly for these parts and one wonders whether some ugly phrases were as sung when Mahler was around.

ANTOINETTE LAUTE-BRUN, soprano (1876 Nimes– ? )

She studied under Duvernoy, Melchissédéc and Mangin at the Conservatoire in Paris. Her début was as a Walküre in 1904 at the Opéra. She gradually moved to bigger parts, showing as she went her wide ranging abilities. Indeed, to have sung six parts in one opera, as Laute-Brun did in *Armida* in 1905, must itself be a record. She appeared in première of various now forgotten works and also in Paris première of *Das Rheingold* and *Die Götterdämmerung* in 1909 and 1908 respectively. In the French provinces she often appeared with success in larger parts. It is curious how many really fine French artists never travel abroad; Laute-Brun's only such excursion was to Belgium on a tour with the Dutch baritone Henri Albers. It may be added that she was accompanied by her husband, the composer Georges Brun. Her recordings are numerous. Her singing is typical of so many French artists of the period; stylish, a clean, neat line and avoidance of all excess.

ARTHUR MIDDLETON, baritone (1880 Logan, Iowa, USA–1929 Chicago)

After studying singing in Boston he embarked on a very successful career on the concert and oratorio platforms. He was heard by Frances Alda who arranged for him to

be offered an engagement at the Metropolitan Opera. He was on the roster of this house from 1914 to 1917, but not much use was made of him. Then, after one season in Chicago he gave up opera and went on to become one of his country's most acclaimed oratorio singers. In this field he sang in *The Messiah* at least 200 times and as *Elijah* at least 150 times. He appears never to have sung abroad. He made records only for the Edison Company. It is a fine voice, schooled to cope readily with the fast moving music of this piece, every note firmly in place.

MARIA OLITZKA, contralto (1873 Berlin - 1949 Chicago)

The family had emigrated to the United States from Poland. After acquiring the basics of singing locally, she studied further in Berlin and Paris. In 1892 she made her début in Bryonia. That she appeared at Covent Garden as early as 1894, singing the part of the Page in *Les Huguenots* indicates her progress; she remained until 1897. She was at the Metropolitan Opera from 1895 to 1901. There her début was as Siebel, a role which she also sings here. For the next decade she sang with great success in major European houses. After 1910 she worked mainly in the United States, increasingly in concerts. In retirement in Chicago she took students. None of her records, Columbia, Edison, Gramophone & Typewriter, Lyrophon, Zonophone, is common.

MARIE RAPPOLD, soprano, née Winterroth (1879 London–1957 Los Angeles)

She appeared in children's roles, and, after emigrating to America, she studied singing. It is astonishing that she should make her début in so sizeable a part as Sulamith in Goldmark's *Die Königin von Saba* at no less than the Metropolitan Opera. In 1909, after four years, she moved to Bucharest, but in 1910 she was back at the Metropolitan Opera where she remained a full decade. Subsequently she appeared in Naples, Havana and Chicago before retiring to teach singing. Her polished technique and fine voice, with its beautifully projected high notes, was recorded only by Edison.

LEO SLEZAK, tenor (1873 Krasna Hora, Moravia–1946 Egern am Tegernsee, Bavaria)

His unruliness led to his leaving school at 14 and becoming a gardener. The estate was sold and he took an engineering apprenticeship. His voice was heard by the distinguished baritone Adolf Robinson, who taught him without fee, a kindness which Slezak never forgot. Robinson had such faith in him that he persuaded the Brunn Opera House to take him on a three year contract with enhanced, advanced, starting pay, to be worked off later. Thus by 1896 he was appearing and, in 1898, he moved to Berlin. Moving from a small to a large house meant a loss of big roles but the chance of learning much. He was given leave to appear in Breslau in 1899 and this marked the beginning of his real career. During this leave most of the Breslau company appeared at Covent Garden and he was included. Thus he was able to observe Jean de Reszke, and even sometimes to stand in for him, and thus to experience singing with the likes of Gulbranson, Melba, Homer and E. de Reszke. As soon as his Berlin contract had expired he joined Mahler's company in Vienna. He remained there for over a quarter of a century. He was able to take time off to study with Jean de Reszke in Paris, emerging as a much more complete artist. He sang all over Europe and in North America. As the years passed he moved more into the recital room and, with yet more years, into the film studio.

His record career extended from 1901 to around 1938 and across labels from Anker to Zonophone. The aria from *Otello* is from a 4-minute black wax cylinder; that

from Tosca is the only one to appear on blue Amberol. They are stunningly beautiful examples of his voice and one feels that each phrase means so much to him that he can scarce bear to leave it for the one to follow.

WALTER SOOMER, bass-baritone (1878 Liegnitz, Schlesien–1955 Leipzig)

After studying philosophy he turned to singing, which he studied in Berlin. His début was in Colmar, Alsace in 1902. After an engagement in Halle lasting four years, he moved to Dresden where he remained until 1927. From 1906 until 1914 he sang at the Bayreuth Festivals; from 1908 to 1911 at the Metropolitan Opera. After the Great War he moved to the bass repertoire. After leaving Dresden he directed a school of music and singing in Leipzig. His voice was recorded by Gramophone & Typewriter, The Gramophone Company, Edison and Vox.

JACQUES URLUS, tenor (1867 Hergaurath, Belgium, then Germany–1935 Noordwijk, Holland)

His parents were Dutch. He was almost totally self-taught, and gained experience in church choirs and amateur singing companies. An offer to train at Brussels Conservatoire had to be foregone for lack of means. Eventually he managed to have lessons, and to make his début in Holland as Beppo in *I Pagliacci* with a Dutch company travelling around Holland. He formed a technique for increasing his earnings by playing off one director against another. He also at this time studied German. He sang in Leipzig for the first time in 1900 and continued there until about 1927. He was now singing Siegmund and Tristan, Raoul and Samson, Oberon and Florestan. He was also busy with concerts and oratorios, including the Evangelist in the annual performance of the *St. Matthew Passion* under Mengelberg, and guest appearances all over Northern Europe. His self-training and his health must have been equally excellent to cope with the work he was doing. He travelled to America in 1912, but could appear only in Boston rather than New York, on account of his German schedules, but subsequently he did sing there too. He was able to add *Parsifal* to his repertoire on the expiry of the copyright in 1914. During the war years he was mainly at the Metropolitan Opera. In 1921 he took part in the famous Mahler Festival under Mengelberg. He continued to work very hard. He retired from opera in 1932. He stormed out of Munich in 1933 when, in accordance with some new rule, the names of foreigners were at the bottom of the list. At the time of his first records, in 1902, he was still a local artist singing in Dutch. Thereafter, with a few exceptions, everything is in German. He was renowned for his imposing bearing, his acting without mannerisms and for using at all times a genuine singing tone.

ALICE VERLET, soprano (1873 Belgium–1934 Paris)

From 1892 to 1904 she sang at the Opéra-Comique, Paris, in the French provinces, and in Brussels, then from 1904 until the Great War she was at the Paris Opéra. She sang in Beecham's 1910 London season. She moved to Chicago in 1915, and remained in America for some years, after which she taught in Paris.

Verlet sang for various record companies, (as Mme. X for Pathé). She was a fine coloratura soprano which makes it rather strange that she is suspiciously near to sounding flat on the last note of the Quartet.

GIOVANNI ZENATELLO, tenor (1876 Verona–1949 New York)

After training and making a début as a baritone, in 1898, Zenatello, it seems, was

suddenly asked to appear as Canio, the major tenor role in *I Pagliacci*. Apparently his success was such that at once he ceased being a pleasant light baritone, and began to take on big tenor parts.

He had the good sense to realise that re-training was necessary, and the strength of purpose to put by sufficient means to do this as soon as possible. He made rapid progress and gained experience, including a trip to South America, sufficient for him to appear on the opening night of La Scala's 1902 season under Toscanini. In 1904 he took part in the famous and disastrous first performance of *Madama Butterfly*. He was now appearing regularly in South America and in 1905 he came for the first time to London. As was related earlier, Bonci, perhaps against his long term interest, deserted the Manhattan for the Metropolitan Opera. Thus Hammerstein in 1907 searching keenly for a leading tenor, was delighted to find a very adequate replacement in Zenatello. At Covent Garden in 1908 he sang Otello for the first time.

He continued with increasing success in New York, London, Chicago and Buenos Aires. Zenatello, also had the ambition of opera seasons in his home town. By chance he tried out a few phrases in the Roman theatre and realised that, unlike Constantino, he need do no building. Thus, in 1913 he and his wife, Maria Gay, inaugurated the Verona Festival. He continued to appear in major opera seasons until ill-health compelled him to retire in 1929. Reviews indicate that wisdom might have persuaded him to go a little earlier. It was through him that Maria Callas obtained her first important appearances in Italy. His records appeared on Gramophone and Typewriter, Fonotipia, Odeon, Columbia, HMV/Victor and Edison. This is the only one to appear on cylinder.

Mathilde Marchesi has been mentioned several times in these notes. Records of a number of her students are gathered together on CD 1188 with a discussion of her school.

Most of the sources of information on singers derive ultimately from what they themselves choose to say, sometimes even this varies from occasion to occasion.

It will be noticed that the ambience is often quite different on concerted items as the artists as a group were further from the recording horn than the soloists were.

The four-minute cylinders often play for well over four-minutes. As much as 4'50" has been observed. This did not result in "end of side" distortion familiar from discs, as the radius remained unchanged. However, on some tracks "pre-echo" is noticeable. This sometimes happened in the moulding of loud passages of the very finely spaced turns of the four-minute cylinders. Another problem is that over the years some cylinders have warped, becoming slightly elliptical. This can result in a slight wavering in the sound which affects principally clarinets and similar steady-toned instruments. Fortunately, the vibrato normal with voices covers the effect.

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