

SYMPOSIUM RECORDS CD 1292

A SYMPOSIUM OF MAJOR RARITIES 1901~1909

"WE SING BETTER THAN OUR GRANDPARENTS!" George Bernard Shaw, one of the very few critics who actually knew thoroughly and deeply what he was writing about, and who was fearless in stating it, was looking back. In what turned out to be the finale to three-quarters of a century of writing on the performance of music, he concluded that The Golden Age of Singing, the period just before living memory, was a myth; and that the best singers of his youth were no better than ours [but the average was much worse]. He found that voice production in 1950 was immeasurably better than it had been fifty years before, though ability in roulades, shakes and gruppettos was lost. And he re-stated his assertion that the problem lay not with Handel, Mozart and Wagner, who wrote largely for the voice's middle-range, but with those who, straining after heightened dramatic tension, made ever increasing use of the top of the register. Verdi [*The World*, April 12th 1893] habitually treated the upper fifth of a voice as its normal range.

Record collectors have the opportunity with this album of hearing a recital of records of extreme rarity, including a considerable proportion beyond reasonable doubt unique. With modern technology, and through the new medium of the compact disc it is possible to reproduce them with exemplary fidelity. And to those who claim not to like digital sound we can reply only that given a properly conducted "blind test" they will not be able to tell the difference. (For some years self-styled experts admired the superiority of analogue sound on the BBC; totally unaware that much of it came via digital links.)

The records range from those which are musically excellent, in the sense that the singer's style and interpretation are felt still to be "current" at its best, through those on which the verdict runs, "Yes, but we would not do it like that today.", to those which are at best curiosities, but which, we hope, the listener will at any rate, be glad to have had the opportunity of hearing.

VICTOR CAPOUL (Toulouse 1839-Pujaudran-du-Gers 1924) enrolled at the Paris Conservatoire in 1859 to study with Reviel, and made his *début* in 1861 at the Opéra Comique as Daniel in Adam's *Le Chalet*. He sang in London from 1871 to 1879. In 1871 he also appeared in New York in lyric roles, and repeated the journey in 1883 and in 1891. After a spell of teaching there he returned to Paris as a director of the Opéra. Apparently he lost heavily through speculation and passed his last years in poverty, reportedly incinerating everything connected with his career.

His voice has, none-the-less, survived in music from *Jocelyn*, in which he appeared in Paris shortly after its première in Brussels. Takes 2 and 4 exist, each so far as is known, in a single unique copy; as the speeds differ, presumably from more than one session. (One wonders what became of takes 1 and 3!) Presumably Phonotipie, as Fonotipia was in France, had some form of special issue in mind, as the labels have the normal serial numbering, copies 2 and 1 respectively, but are printed uniquely(?) with silver ink. The piece is sung with such grace and tenderness as what remains of the voice permits. It must be accounted remarkable that after ninety years these two discs have come together again in one collection.

FÉLIA LITVINNE né Schütz (St. Petersburg 1860?-Paris 1936) was of cultivated Russian and Canadian parentage. At fifteen years of age she travelled to Paris where she studied for three years under Mme. Barthe-Banderali, and had lessons from Pauline

Viardot-Garcia. She had lessons or advice also from Victor Maurel. Her début, in 1880, was under her family name, but by 1882 she had become Litvinova. With a repertoire of over forty operas, ranging from Donizetti to Wagner, she sang with enormous success throughout Europe and in New York. She appeared always with the greatest singers, including Battistini, Calvé, the de Reszkes, Escalaïs, Kaschmann, Maurel, Melba, Sammarco, Ancona and Lassalle. Her last operatic performance was in 1916; she continued with concerts until the early '20s. She then taught and wrote her memoirs. Her pupils included Nina Koshetz, Marcel Denya and Germaine Lubin.

Almost all of her records are rare or very rare; this one is almost certainly unique.

ERNEST van DYCK (Antwerp 1861-Berlaer-les-Lierre 1923) was one of many to enter the world of music against parental opposition. Thus he studied law, but then, whilst working as a journalist in Paris, he was heard by Gounod, who deemed the voice to be naturally placed and arranged voice training by Lamoureux. He studied with Chabrier, Massenet and Saint-Yves Bax. In 1883 he appeared very successfully in concerts in Paris; the year following he made a successful operatic début in his home town. He next studied Wagner under Felix Mottl and in 1887 made his Paris début as Lohengrin. In 1888 he began highly successful associations with Bayreuth and with Vienna; the latter including the first performance of *Werther* [in German]. He also sang in London, New York and St. Petersburg. Later he taught and founded the Nouveaux Concerts in Antwerp.

His few records are rare and mostly poorly recorded in a manner that has lead collectors to believe that the voice was in poor state. Perhaps a re-assessment is due. The Schumann song, then a favourite and sung out of context by many artists, is the commonest of his records, usually found worn and coupled with a rather boring song by another artist. Here, in a rare coupling, we note that there is plenty of voice. (Unfortunately the sound deteriorates towards the end of the second side as Homophone tended to cram too much on to 10" records and pressed them in inferior material.)

PIERRE GAILHARD (Toulouse 1848-Paris 1918) proceeded from studies in his home town and at the Paris Conservatoire to make his début at the Opéra Comique in 1867 as Falstaff in *Le Songe d'une Nuit d'Été* by Ambroise Thomas. In 1872 he moved to the Opéra. His sang for forty-five years principally in these two houses, and continued to perform after he took over direction of the latter in 1899. Under his direction Eames, Melba and the de Reszkes began their Opéra careers.

His four records, on which he appears as Pedro Gailhard, are seldom seen, and this alternative take of one of them is believed to be even rarer still. The label bears the inscription: Créé par Pedro GAILHARD en 1863.

GUILLAUME IBOS (Muret, Haute-Garonne 1860- ? 1952) sang the part of Roland in Massenet's *Esclarmonde* at the first Brussels performance in 1889, and in Paris in 1893 he created the French version of *Werther*, in company with Marie Delna, Marie Thiéry and Maximilien-Nicolas Bouvet.

All that remains of his voice is in two test pressings, the recording company unknown, reputedly made when he was appearing in Milan in 1907 and 1908. He was clearly a well trained tenor of the French school, with style and imagination. (A cylinder purporting from its announcement to be of Ibos can be discounted.)

LUCIEN FUGÈRE (Paris 1848-Paris 1935) had to start work at the age of six when his father died. At twelve he was already enamoured of the stage and hung around the theatres on the chance of a ticket from someone leaving early. Of course, being taken on by a clique meant seeing a complete performance and a small fee. He was turned

down by the Conservatoire, but managed to attend twice weekly free lessons. He must have acquired the necessary skills in voice management for he fulfilled a heavy schedule of engagements right up to 1932. Once he reached the Opéra Comique it became his artistic home from which he seldom strayed. He participated in over two dozen premières, though admittedly few of the works have survived.

Fugère's records for Columbia, made when in his eightieth year, are well known, but a quarter of a century before, there were a few Zonophone records, which are now very rare, and one(?) Pantophone record, surviving, perhaps, only in this copy.

LÉON LAFFITTE (Sainte-Geniès, Haute-Garonne 1875-Paris 1938) was trained at the Conservatoire and made his début at the Opéra in 1898 as David in *Die Meistersinger*. During the following fifteen seasons he was much acclaimed in Brussels; he also appeared in other European centres. In 1916 he went to South America where he sang mainly dramatic roles. He returned to the Opéra in 1923.

All of his records are rare, particularly these from the very earliest 10" issues, and of such copies as have survived, few are in such good condition as these. (It would actually be very interesting to know what were typical production runs of such items.)

CHARLOTTE WYNS (Paris 1868-) and Marie Delna were regarded by Massenet as amongst the most faithful singers of his works. Wynn made her début in the title-role of *Mignon* (Thomas) at the Opéra Comique in 1893. She was chosen for the role of Divonne in the première of *Sapho* at the Opéra Comique in 1897, with Emma Calvé in the title-role, and in 1898 Massenet dedicated his song "Amoureuse" to her. In 1903 Wynn created Charlotte in *Werther* for Monte Carlo, and soon afterwards she successfully replaced Calvé as Anita in a revival of *La Navarraise*. Shortly after, she made her sole visit to Covent Garden, singing Santuzza. In 1904 she was again singing Charlotte, as she was for the hundredth performance of *Werther* at the Opéra Comique in the 1905 season. In that season she appeared also as Grisélidis. Wynn's other roles included Carmen, Proserpine and Jean (*Le Portrait de Manon*). Her career embraced appearances in Berlin and Cairo.

These, her only known disc recordings, are re-issued here for the first time; further items are extant on Dutreih cylinders. Dutreih probably started out as a small independent company, from internal evidence using Pathé's facilities, and probably becoming a subsidiary of Pathé.

EMILE COSSIRA (Orthez 1854-Quebec 1923) made his début at the Opéra as Fernand (*La Favorite*) in 1888. In the same season he sang Radames, Vasco da Gama and Raoul. In 1889 he sang Roméo, Faust and Edgardo, and created Ascanio. In 1894 he was the first Tristan at La Monnaie; the Isolde was Léonie Tanésy. He was also the first French Walther von Stolzing in 1896 at Lyons. Around the turn of the century he was at the Opéra Comique singing Don José, Werther and Pylade (*Iphigénie en Tauride*). Cossira sang at Covent Garden in 1891 and 1894; and at Monte Carlo in 1893 (Fernand), 1896 (Tristan), 1899 (Faust) and 1891 (Samson). In retirement he taught in Canada.

About eighteen records of Cossira in mainly French repertoire were made in Paris 1904 by the Gramophone & Typewriter Co. They were released on their own black label and on the recently acquired Zonophone label. All are very rare; again, one wonders what was a typical production run.

JEANNE TIPHAINE (1873- 1958) made her début as Isabelle in *Le Pré aux Clercs* by Hérold at the Opéra Comique in 1894, and gave her final performance there in 1938. In 1898 she was the first Paris Musette and she created the role of Irma in *Louise* in 1900. Tiphaine appeared very frequently as Musette and as Marie in *La Fille du*

Régiment until the first world war. In *Mignon* she sang both the name part and Philine; she performed as three Zerlinas (Pergolesi and Auber, as well as Mozart) and participated in many Opéra Comique premières, latterly in character roles.

Her very rare Beka discs show a lovely and technically flawless voice. These and a few vertical-cut recordings are the only souvenirs of an unbroken forty-four year career.

PIERRE CORNUBERT (1863-1922) made his début at the Opéra Comique in 1888, where, in the following year, he created the part of Héraut Byzantin in Massenet's *Esclarmonde*. He rose to become one of France's leading tenors, appearing in most of the country's major houses. In 1899 he sang in Havana, moving to New York the next year to replace Albert Saléza, who had become ill. He appeared at Covent Garden in 1904, and in 1911 became a Professeur at the Conservatoire.

This Arya Super Disque with an Art Deco-style black and white label, is a repressing of Ultima 322. Ultima, like Dutreih above, may have moved from independence in to the Pathé group.

GIUSEPPE DE LUCA (Rome 1876-New York 1950) was a pupil of Ottavio Bartolini and then enrolled at the Accademia di Santa Cecilia. After his début as Valentine in *Faust* at Piacenza in 1897 he gained experience in various Italian houses. In 1902 he created the part of Michonnet in Cilea's *Adriana Lecouvreur*, in 1903 the part of Gleby in Giordano's *Siberia* and in 1904 the part of Sharpless in the disastrous first *Madama Butterfly*. Despite his excellence he reached New York only in 1916, but, once there, he remained for over three decades the leading baritone, and sang in the local premières of around a dozen works.

Every collector is very familiar with de Luca's warm, instantly recognisable timbre, however, few have ever heard this extremely rare item; a creator record and, moreover, of a piece cut from such few performances as have been given since 1904.

MAGGIE TEYTE (Wolverhampton 1888-London 1976) studied at the Royal College of Music, and then with Jean de Reszke in Paris. Her début, in Monte Carlo in 1907, was as Zerlina in *Don Giovanni*. During the following two years her success at the Opéra as Mélisande was sensational, Debussy hailing her as the successor to Mary Garden. After a season in London she moved on to Chicago and then Boston. After the first world war she returned to England and married. For a time she withdrew from performance, but during the 'thirties she re-appeared with renewed success. She sang for the Forces during the second world war. Her final stage part was Belinda in *Dido and Aeneas* at the Mermaid Theatre in 1951.

This record is technically so odd that one wonders how it came to be released. In any case its rarity suggests that it must rapidly have been withdrawn.

Mrs. HENRY WOOD (-London 1909) is described by her husband in his memoirs as Princess Olga Oroussoff. She was taught by him and became an accomplished concert singer, admired by many, including Elgar. Wood describes her voice as "a true Russian soprano voice-rich, with a metallic ring."

Of her sixteen records, only six released. They were available for less than a year and are consequently very rare. These Shakespeare settings by Eric Coates, he spelled the name Oroussov, are two of four, first performed at a Promenade Concert and recorded shortly before the singer's death. According to its composer, this setting of "Who is Sylvia?" was Melba's "favourite song". Conductors frequently "graduate" to the orchestra from the piano or the violin. Hamilton Harty plays accompaniments on many records, on one he appears also as a soloist, Beecham plays on two occasions, Henry Wood's playing has survived only in these records with his wife.

EMMA ALBANI (Chambly, near Montreal 1847-London 1930) came from a musical background. She studied with Lamperti and made a triumphant début (apparently to her own astonishment) as Amina in *La Sonnambula* at Messina, Sicily, in 1870. By 1871 she was already singing roles in London which Patti was also singing, later they were in the same touring company. At this time she was still continuing her studies with Lamperti. She was soon the leading soprano of the English music festival circuit. Appearances in London were interrupted for visits to Russia. In New York in 1874 she learnt the part of Elsa in *Lohengrin* in fifteen days; it was her first dramatic role. She went from success to success, like Lilli Lehmann, in an astonishingly wide repertoire. At her retirement concert in 1911, Patti, herself long retired, sang her tribute to her. Her last years, like those of her former colleague Capoul, were impoverished through misjudged investments. In 1925 Melba organized a benefit concert to assist her.

Her records are very hard to assess. There is a very pure and beautiful tone, and an astonishingly fine slow shake, but beyond that, whatever changes may have taken place in the intervening years, can we believe that her enormous reputation rested on what we hear now?

These three test pressings have no labels whatever. They are known to have been in the estate of Albani's son Ernest F. Gye, and somehow found their way to market stall in Kettering many years later. Two had in fact been transcribed in 1952, but today we have been able to effect much improved results. It is interesting to reflect that these were the years in which for the first time singers could hear themselves.

SALOMEA KRUSZELNICKA, also Kruszeniski (Tarnapol, Ukraine 1872-Lemberg 1952) was taught piano by her father and then studied piano and voice in Lemberg with Wysocki, and in Milan. After her début in Lemberg in ?1892, she gained experience in Krakau, Odessa, Trieste, Chile, Cremona and Parma. Then, from 1898 to 1903, she was the leading soprano of Warsaw, with guest-appearances in Moscow, St. Petersburg and Paris. She then left for Italy, possibly after involvement in political intrigue. In Italy she contributed to the success of the revised *Madama Butterfly*, sang the first Italian Salome and Elektra, and was a celebrated Isolde. After her marriage in 1913 she appeared infrequently (in 1927 she toured North America), but taught in Milan. In 1939 she visited her family in Poland, but, the war starting, she could not return. She taught in Lemberg, and, as late as 1945, sang for charity.

Although her recording career lasted from 1902 to 1927, there are relatively few records and few collections have more than one or two examples of them.

MAX DAWISON (Schwedt a. d. Oder 1869-Hamburg 1953) studied in Berlin with Adolf Zebrian, in Cologne with Benno Stolzenberg, and in Paris with Mariano Padilla y Ramos and Désirée Artôt de Padilla. His début, in 1889, was at Düsseldorf as the Herald in *Lohengrin*, from 1890 to 1900 he was in Prague, and then, until 1926, in Hamburg. He sang Alberich at Bayreuth from 1906 to 1909, Telramund in 1908 and Klingsor in 1909. He also sang in oratorio. In retirement he remained in Hamburg and taught.

Dawison's very rare records, made in 1904 and 1906, show a fine and well-schooled baritone voice. However, a 1904 Bayreuth recording of Alberich's curse is truly legendary; despite being noted in *Opera on Record* there is no hard evidence that it ever existed.

T. P. SANTAGANO-GORCHAKOVA né Alexandra Menzenkamp (1841-1913) is believed to have made her début in about 1865, and is known to have appeared in Kiev in 1867. She had an extensive and successful career in Russia, but is not thought to have appeared abroad. In retirement she taught in Moscow.

Some ten records of her voice were made in Moscow in 1901; all are of extreme rarity. 1901 was the year in which the first 10" records became available. As a means of expanding the catalogue of "serious" music quickly, a group of recordings of Russian origin, including one of Gorchakova, was made available in the West. As the labels were printed in Russian, it was necessary to print the catalogue in Russian and English.

Gorchakova is the earliest-born female singer on record. It is a real performance. The voice is still bright and clear, signs of age being apparent only in an occasional shortage of breath.

Other examples on Symposium Records, and further biographical details can be found as follows:

Félia Litvinne	1101	1128	1173
Ernest van Dyck	1172		
Pierre Gailhard	1172		
Lucien Fugère	1125		
Pierre Cornubert	1173		
Giuseppe de Luca	1111	1197	1198
Mrs. Henry J. Wood	1093		
Dame Emma Albani	1093		
Salomea Kruszelnicka	1248		

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